

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

STAR WARS 2
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
~latest news

**George Peppard on
DAMNATION
ALLEY**

SUPERMAN 2
~special report

**New sf shocker
ALIEN**

Leonard Nimoy in



**INVASION OF THE
BODY SNATCHERS**





THIS ISLAND EARTH (1955) ~ Full review on page 36

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

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Welcome to our latest—and possibly busiest issue of **Starburst**, still Britain's number one film fantasy magazine.

As you will have noticed by our cover lines, we've really crowded a lot into this issue, a reflection of the mass of activity in the science fiction world.

Plus, in answer to all your requests, the most demanded feature of all, as we interview Gerry Anderson on his television triumphs.

Because of its somewhat limited distribution we've also given space to the 1978 release, **Damnation Alley**, with an added bonus of comments on the movie from its lead star, George Peppard.

Next month: Brian Johnson on his special effects work, the 1956 classic **Forbidden Planet** reviewed, interview with **Body Snatchers** director Philip Kaufman, plus Mork and Mindy. And beyond that: **Lost in Space**, **Dr Who** from the beginning and **Invasion of the Space Turks** (?). You'll have to be here to find out what that last one's all about!

Best wishes,

Dez Skinn

Dez Skinn/Editor.

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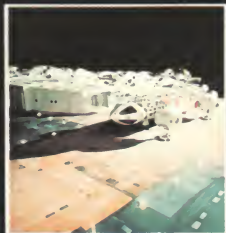
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Invasion of the

After our look at the 1956 version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* last month *Starburst* now presents a review of the remake, by author of Science Fiction in the Cinema John Baxter.



The primary question to be asked about Philip Kaufman's remake of Don Siegel's 1956 classic is, of course, "Why bother?" Surely Siegel, with his customary authority, had wrung every last drop of juice from Jack Finney's gruesome little tale of interstellar invaders turning humanity into soul-less unemotional "pod people"?

Surprisingly, however, the film is a triumph. For once, a remake has not trespassed on the original, but re-explored, updated and redefined it for a new audience.

Siegel's film, made at the height of the sf horror boom, suffered from the fifties' prevailing stylistic preoccupation; by tradition, sf films were set in small towns, partly because city locations cost money, but also to place the conflicts with space visitors in a rural environment, where battle lines would



be drawn unmistakably between alien nastiness and solid American virtue. In most of these films, the bug-eyed monsters go down not so much before superior technology as the combined power of the Bible and the Constitution.

Siegel clearly agrees that the 1956 film was far from the last word on the subject, and gives his seal of approval to the remake by playing a small uncredited role as the cabdriver who picks up the fleeing lovers (Donald Sutherland and Brooke Adams) as they try to make it to the airport. According to Kaufman, he was in Siegel's office discussing the role when Kevin McCarthy, star of the first version, happened to drop in, and on the spot agreed to do a cameo himself. Not one to miss an opportunity, Kaufman has him repeat his climactic scene from the first *Invasion*, pounding on

Body Snatchers



Opposite above: *The pod duplicate of Elizabeth (Brooke Adams) takes shape in an indoor greenhouse.* Opposite below: *Bennell (Donald Sutherland) grapples with a duplicate of his best friend Jack Bellice (Jeff Goldblum).* Above: *The warehouse nursery where the "pod people" cultivate the pods for distribution around the world is reduced to flaming ruin by Bennell.*

the window of Sutherlands' car and screaming "You're next! You're next!"—a superb touch that disarms any accusations of exploitation.

The major alteration, that of setting, is initially the most difficult to accept, but by placing the story in San Francisco, his home town, Kaufman has preserved the allegoric structures of the original idea (put succinctly by Siegel as "People are pods. They're becoming vegetables. I don't know what the answer is except an awareness of it.") San Francisco's surrealistic topography, with houses cascading down into a business district of pyramid-like skyscrapers permanently shrouded in sea fog, makes an ideal background for the initial invasion as the alien spores (seen foaming off the surface of some unnamed planet and drifting earthwards during the credits) descend on

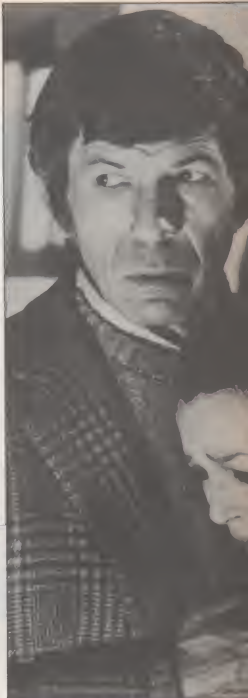
the city in a rainstorm.

Soon their flowers appear everywhere. Teachers encourage children to pick them, lovers bring them home to friends, and the invasion stealthily begins. When we first hear reports of the new pod people at a party thrown by fashionable psychiatrist Leonard Nimoy, he understandably puts the stories of character changes in loved ones down to alienation, stress and the angst of city living. Accustomed to odd ideas, San Francisco ignores this latest plague of mental aberration, and the invasion continued unopposed, creeping through the streets like a conspiracy.

Kaufman adopts a furtive, seedy style perfectly suited to this approach. His doctor hero, played by Donald Sutherland, is not a noble GP as in the first film but an inspector for the Health Department. When

Brooke Adams, his assistant, comes to Sutherland with stories that her boyfriend has ceased to be himself, he investigates desultorily, more interested in the girl than her problem. One feels he is too accustomed to nuttiness to take anything seriously any more.

Her story gets credence only from two members of the "alternative" society—poet Jeff Goldblum and his wife, a hang-over from Haight-Ashbury who runs a mud-bath parlour where believers steam therapeutically in caskets of gluey volcanic slime. The wife's beliefs, a combination of the International Conspiracy Theory and the teachings of Erich von Daniken, adapt without strain to the idea of invading pods. "It's just like when aliens came down millions of years ago to breed with apes and produce man," she says eagerly to an



understandably sceptical audience.

The run-down mud bath parlour with its sinister concrete tubs, its plastic curtains billowing in the steam, is a grisly setting for some of the film's best scenes. As Goldblum drowns on a slab, the eyes of his pod double in the next booth creep open, only to snap shut with an almost audible click as Sutherland bustles in and the psychic contact is broken. Kaufman shows his distinctive style in the handling of such scenes, a blend of forties *Film Noir*, complete with deeply shadowed lighting and occasional tilted camera, and a more modern sense of psychological horror. Knowing that the invasion is almost bound to succeed does little to defuse the tension, merely adding an element of stealthy inevitability.



Greater length, a larger budget, and the forced-draught development of special effects over the last decade also allows the new *Invasion* to develop in detail the vegetable nature of the invaders. After Kaufman sets the scene with a series of vivid images (notably Brooke Adams' double flourishing in a bed of tropical flowers while the girl lies asleep a few feet away) we readily accept that the pod people, despite their glib philosophising, are as soul-less as cactuses. In the film's most chilling sequence, Sutherland collapses from exhaustion in the tiny garden of his hillside house, unaware that, as he sleeps, pods swell and gurgles obscenely all round him, forming perfect replicas of himself and his friends—replicas so perfect, in fact, that



while he can smash those of his companions, he cannot bear to do the same for his own doppelganger, leaving it fatally intact.

Wise to the power of misdirection, Kaufman does not hammer home every point. Although we are aware that the transformation process leaves the human host a desiccated shell, it is left to us to realise that the heaps of grey fibre in every garbage can are the victims' mortal remains. Only at the climax, where Brooke Adams' body caves in like a dried husk does he give us the full force of the metamorphosis, and the effect is all the more dramatic for that. (It also benefits, like the pod growing sequences, from a sound-effects track of notable grisliness, rendered grimly realistic by Dolby sound).

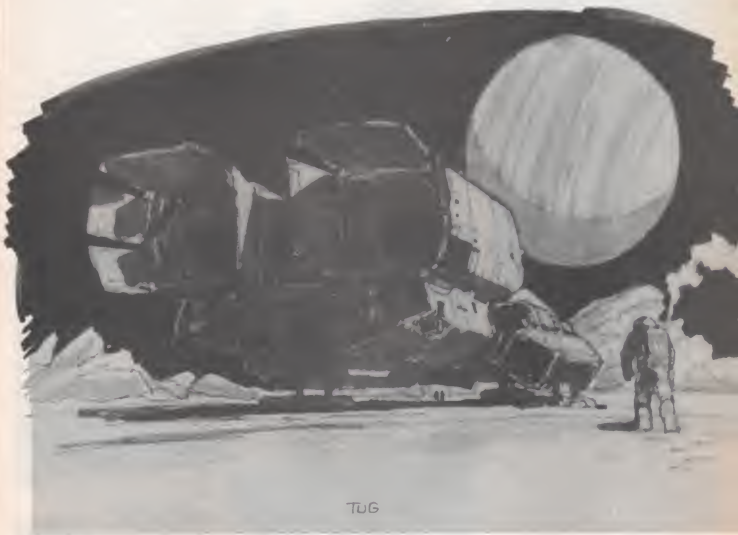
The film, of course, has its dull patches. Too much chasing and hiding mars the conclusion, and it is debatable how much is added by Sutherland's discovery and destruction of the pod nursery, a ramshackle construction in a dockside warehouse, which he reduces improbably to flaming ruin. But a chilling final scene more than makes up for the melodrama, as the pod people confront what may be the last living human on earth. A great film, this *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is bound to become a classic in its own right.

Far left: *Bennell* (Donald Sutherland) prowls around the house where *Elizabeth* (Brooke Adams) lives in an effort to prevent her duplication. Near left: *Dr David Kibner* (Leonard Nimoy) comforts a terrified housewife who claims her husband is no longer the same man. Above: Director of the original film, *Don Siegel*, appears as a cab driver. Below: The pod people queue to help load pods onto trucks for dispersal throughout America and the world.



ALIEN

Filming behind a veil of secrecy that makes *Close Encounters* seem as if it was shot on an open set, 20th Century Fox's *Alien* promises to be one of the top sf shockers of the year. *Starburst* has pierced that veil and presents this special report by Phil Edwards.



Since *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, science fiction movie fans seem to have been constantly waiting for *The Next Big Movie*. *Battlestar Galactica* opened strongly in America, but with the departure of special effects wizard John Dykstra from the show, the series seems to have settled into the usual series

patterns of *Logan's Run* and *Planet of the Apes*. Effects sequences are frequently repeated and plot-lines are lifted from shows as old as *Lost in Space* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. However it continues to be popular with a younger audience.

The Salkinds' long-awaited multi-million dollar *Superman The Movie* seemed, for a

short time, to be the promised article – a big effects movie with a built-in cult following. But unfortunately, as much fun as *Superman* is, it can never be the success that *Star Wars* was and continues to be. While the scenes on Krypton have a particular majesty and the sequences concerning Superman's youth and the creation



Above: The crew of the factory ship USCSS Nostromo. Opposite: An unused design for the space ship, designed by O'Bannon and Cobb and executed by Cobb. Below: O'Bannon (left) and Cobb (right) discuss design problems in the Allen art department at Shepperton Studios.

of the Fortress of Solitude have an almost fantastic quality, the low comedy relief, too reminiscent of the *Batman* television series, ultimately destroys, for me, the magical qualities that the film so persistently strives for.

So what's to come? Sequelmania continues to run riot. *Jaws 2*, *The Empire Strikes Back* (aka *Star Wars 2*), *Omen 2*, and a persistent rumour that Steven Spielberg is re-editing and adding new footage to *Close Encounters* while he works on his latest film *1941*, a comic look at an imaginary Japanese attack on Los Angeles.

Meanwhile 20th Century Fox, currently working on *The Empire Strikes Back*, is readying another big-budget science fiction film for Spring release. Allen, a super

shocker set aboard a ship in deep space. Fox are hoping to repeat the success of *Star Wars*, optimistically opening it in America two years to the day after *Star Wars* first hit movie screens across the country.

Based on an original screenplay by Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett, Allen is a return to the science fiction horror films of the Fifties, such as Howard Hawks' *The Thing*, Donald Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Gordon Douglas' *Them*, and that forgotten 1958 B-movie classic *It The Terror From Beyond Space*.

Despite the promise of horrifying and shocking effects, co-writer and visual consultant Dan O'Bannon doesn't think the film will cause concern for the censor. "I don't think it's as bothersome as *Jaws* - a

movie that could traumatise you in the water! I don't think it would even harm a child's psyche because it's not about mental aberrations or people being violent to each other. The threat in this movie is a total fantasy and the violence is enacted, not by a human being, but by this fantastic creature. I don't think it would be harmful to kids, but it is going to be pretty bloody".

Allen was originally to be directed by Walter Hill, but his commitment to his film *The Driver* prevented this and Fox proposed and signed Ridley Scott to the project. Allen had already been heavily storyboarded and designed with a lean, sparse look more in line with the film's initially smaller budget. But once Fox had committed themselves to a new director and a larger budget (somewhere in the region of nine million dollars) the entire film was restructured with the addition of such designers as H. R. Giger, Jay Teitzell and Ron Cobb. Ridley Scott has been equally responsible for the big change in the look of the movie. As both O'Bannon and Ron Cobb stress, Scott is a fine artist/designer in his own right and has an inexhaustible fund of visual ideas. Scott's only previous feature, *The Duellists*, brought much praise in the design department, though some critics found it somewhat laboured stylistically.

Miniature work is under the control of Brian Johnson who is also in charge of special effects, a task he tackles while also working on the space ships for *Empire Strikes Back*. Swiss-born fantasy artist H. R. Giger, whose book *The Necronomicon* is currently available and contains some of his designs for the unfilmed *Dune*, (which also contained contributions from



O'Bannon and Cobb) was in charge of designing the alien landscapes, artifacts and the creature itself. Ron Cobb, artist, cartoonist and designer was responsible for the Earth-bound technology. As O'Bannon elaborates, "Nothing takes place on any real landscape or anything that *really* exists. It all takes place in and about the space-craft and on an alien landscape." Jay Teitzell was responsible for one of the alien's early forms – charmingly called *the face hugger*, which, despite Fox's tight security on the film, was previewed some months ago in the Los Angeles Times.

Like most big budget films of any kind, the film has not been without its problems. O'Bannon in particular fought hard against script and budget restrictions and cuts, but as shooting progressed it became apparent that certain deletions had left holes in the logic of the story and O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett were able to reintroduce various elements in the story that had been previously deleted.

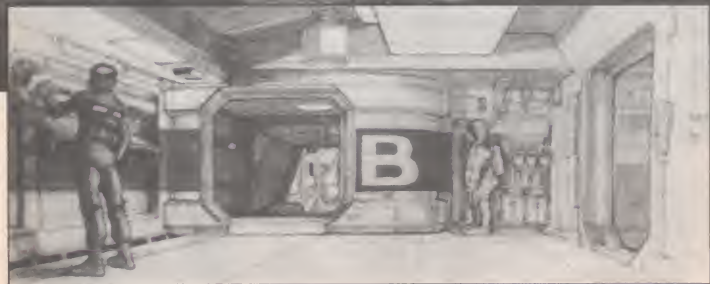
Fox are keeping a tight rein on security, so visitors to the set see very little of what is being shot and nothing of the alien itself. Ron Cobb says rather ambiguously, "You

might say the creature has many forms." It seems possible that O'Bannon has introduced elements of his unfiled screenplay, *They Bite*, in which metamorphosis of various inanimate objects with insects an spiders takes place.

It would be unfair to Fox and more importantly, the audience to reveal too much of *Alien's* gripping and suspenseful story. Suffice to say that by the films terrifying and brilliantly conceived ending few of the cast survive the onslaught of one of the screen's most original and frightening creations.



Top: An early design for the lifeboat scene in which one of the pivotal scenes of *Alien* takes place. Above: Design drawing for the bridge of the *Nostromo*. Left: A scene from the film itself. Three of the crew venture out onto the surface of the planet from which they had picked up a distress call. Right: Design for the lifeboat lock.



DAMNATION ALLEY

When a film distributor holds back the release of a movie for nearly two years one is justified in suspecting that it may be an embarrassment to all concerned. *Damnation Alley* was made back in 1977 after a pre-production period that lasted four years (during which time it was known as *Survival Run*) but has just appeared in British cinemas. And, boy, is it embarrassing...

It begins well with a simulation of World War 3 (there's nothing like a nuclear war to start things off with a bang) but after that it's all down-hill. The setting is an underground missile base, somewhere in the American south-west, populated with some familiar movie faces including those of George Peppard, Jan Michael-Vincent and Murray Hamilton (the mayor from the *Jaws* movies).

When the sneaky Russians unleash their nuclear missiles the Americans are forced to retaliate (cut to stock footage of two IBMs being launched that was last seen in *Superman*) and World War 3 is soon in full

Review by John Brosnan

of the world without too much visible emotion). This is followed by shots of various American H-Bomb tests that still have the power to chill despite their familiarity.

A leap of a couple of years into the future finds conditions on Earth greatly changed, to put it mildly. The war has tilted the Earth's axis, causing the sky to turn a strange colour (don't ask me what connection the Earth's axis has to do with the colour of the sky—ask the film makers) and the radiation has produced the inevitable mutations among the animal life, such as the giant scorpions we see attack Michael-Vincent when he returns from a foraging expedition on his motor bike.

Conditions inside the missile base have deteriorated too. The commander has taken to drink, discipline is lax and the men have taken to squabbling over old issues of *Playboy*, a sure sign of moral degeneration. It's one of these magazines that's partly

cluding the Michael-Vincent and Peppard characters. The latter, unlike the others on the base, hasn't been wasting his time since the war. Instead, with the help of only one other man, he has been busily at work constructing two giant, armoured vehicles, called Landmasters, presumably out of discarded soup cans and other bits and pieces.

Fortunately for the plot these had been housed in a building away from the rest of the base and therefore escaped being destroyed. Peppard proudly unveils these machines to Michael-Vincent and a black survivor (Paul Winfield), who, to judge by their surprised expressions, didn't even know the things existed. This sequence, when the Landmasters, bristling with armaments, roll triumphantly out of their hangar reminds one of the similar unveiling sequence of the giant vehicle in *The Big Bus*.

Peppard's intention is to drive across country to the town of Albany which apparently escaped destruction. So off they go, only to run into trouble within a very short time when a violent storm destroys one of the Landmasters, killing one of the men in the process.

The survivors continue on in the remaining vehicle and arrive at a sand-covered Las Vegas which for some reason still has electricity. "Like they say, the lights in Las Vegas never go out," remarks Michael-Vincent by way of explanation as he gazes around a well-illuminated casino. Las Vegas contains one other attraction—a beautiful French girl (Dominique Sanda) who survived the war by hiding in a bomb shelter (one wonders why no one else had the same idea).



swing. Within the underground bunker the air force men watch a large illuminated map that shows American cities being obliterated one by one. This disturbing sequence is the most successful in the picture, and the reason for that is the calm, matter-of-fact way it's handled (men trained to carry out nuclear warfare probably would be able to watch the end

responsible for the destruction of the base—a dozing soldier drops his cigarette on one and thus ignites a gas leak. The whole place then goes up in a series of spectacular explosions, some of which come from another George Peppard movie, the 1965 *Operation Crossbow*, which explains why you might glimpse a row of V2 missiles blowing up. Only four men survive, in-



With their new companion they continue onto the next town where they stop to refuel and explore but soon find themselves under attack by man-eating bugs ("Attention! The town is full of killer cockroaches!" announces Peppard over the Landmaster's loud-speaker system). They lose another of their number in this attack but shortly afterwards pick up a young boy (Jackie

One of the strange things about *Damnation Alley* is that for a big-budget Hollywood movie it looks very tacky, particularly in the area of its special effects. This is surprising because the effects men involved—including Linwood Dunn, Frank Van Der Veer and Milton Rice—are among Hollywood's top experts. The psychedelic sky, for instance, looks spec-

possible to create a really exciting story from the basic premise of someone having to drive a futuristic vehicle across a nightmarish, post-WW3 landscape, and in fact someone has. That someone is the sf author Roger Zelazny who once wrote a novel called *Damnation Alley*. In theory this film is based on that book but any similarity between the two is an accident on the part of the film-makers.

Review by George Peppard

In 1977 Peppard said of the film:

It's a very entertaining picture and I think it could be a huge success. Jan Michael Vincent and myself are Air Force officers underground in a defence complex after the holocaust, when we hear a radio signal, just one, coming from the other side of the country, so we set out to reach it. We don't know that the signal is for real or that anybody is there. It could be a rape or a computer that someone set up before the nuclear explosion. But we set out along *Damnation Alley*, the only path that we can take through the radioactive fields.

En route, we find a girl, Dominique Sanda, who has also survived; she was down in a bomb shelter at the time of the blast. We also come across some pretty creepy-crawly spooky creatures. Mutants. Huge, huge things that eat everything. We don't know how they get to be like that but that's the science-fiction element of the film, which is kind of fun.

I think people like watching science-fiction in times of stress. We tend, in times of economic well-being, to have more interest in the examination of our inner selves and our social problems, but when things are tough I think we just want to relax and not think about it. That's one reason why I think this film will be a success. Also, it happens to have a very interesting and entertaining story. I'm very pleased it is.

In 1978 he had changed his mind

I will say that when we completed the film, I thought we had a very good film. Jack Smight directed it. At that point, I think, it cost about \$6,500,000. They went to \$8,000,000 with technically changing the colour of the skies and editing. They totally re-edited the film – the executives at 20th Century Fox!

And the film as you will see it – if you do see it, if you choose to see it – is no longer the film that Jack created. Unfortunately, because he did a wonderful job.

It was the story of some people who go across America from the New Mexico area to Albany, New York, with one of those futurist things called a Landmaster. It's a trek story, as we call it. The only humanity is what happens between the people: the relationships, the sexuality, the attempted murders, and so forth.

None of which you will see now. That's out!

It's a trek story about this Landmaster now. With purple skies.



The \$6 million movie. Despite the bionic budget, some of *Damnation Alley*'s special effects suggested that technicians didn't have the technology. Note the canvas midriff section of the Landmaster.

Earl Haley) who proves his worth later when he saves Ms Sanda from a fate-worse-than-death at the hands of a mutant hillbilly, obviously suffering from terminal acne, by lobbing a well-aimed rock at him.

The Landmaster is then engulfed by flood waters created by a world-wide storm (this sequence includes footage from another old film, Pal's *Atlantis the Lost Continent*) but they emerge from the water to find that the world is now back to normal. Apparently the storm caused the axis to right itself and thus the sky regained its blue colour. Well, it stands to reason, doesn't it?

Not only that but they discover that Albany was indeed untouched by the war, the subsequent radioactive fall-out and even the effects of the recent storm, and remains an idyllic pastoral community filled with green pastures, unmutated horses (only four legs per horse) and bronzed, healthy-looking young people who greet our heroes with open arms. End of film accompanied by surge of inspirational music. The audience files out of the cinema filled with the belief that even if there is a nuclear war Everything Will Turn Out All Right.

tacular (it was done with lasers) but so crudely matted into the live action that at times the matte lines around the actors look as they've been drawn with a felt tip pen.

The optical work on the scorpion attack is also unsatisfactory—the scorpions themselves, live ones photographically enlarged by Ken Middleham (of *Phase IV* fame), look impressive but are so crudely inserted into the desert landscape that the illusion is destroyed (for publicity stills of this sequence full-size, non-moving props were used).

The matte painting of the sand-covered Las Vegas is one of the worst I've seen in a long time, and the model shots involving the Landmaster during the flood are also unconvincing. Nor is the full-size Landmaster, built at a cost of 300,000 dollars, very convincing, either mainly because its two armoured segments are connected by what is obviously a length of painted canvas that doesn't even look water-proof much less bullet-proof.

But what really sinks this film is the lacklustre direction by Jack Smight (whose previous sf film was the disappointing *The Illustrated Man*) and the script by Alan Sharp and Lucas Heller. It should be



The Spirit of Evil

Reviewed by John Brosnan.

Recently I visited my doctor to enquire about a lump that was growing on the back of my neck. "It's a sebaceous cyst," he informed me, "and quite harmless." "Thank heavens!" I cried. "I thought I had a little Indian medicine man growing back there!" He looked at me strangely, not having heard of a film called *The Manitou* which I had seen a few nights previously. *The Manitou* is one of those movies that falls into the "utterly absurd but great fun" category. It's about this actress, Karen (*Susan Strasberg*), who finds a large lump growing at the base of her neck, but in her case it's not a mere sebaceous cyst. Instead, after x-raying it, her doctors discover that there's an embryo-like form within it.

The day before the planned operation to remove it Karen visits her former lover (*Tony Curtis*), the only person she can turn to in this crisis. Called Harry Erskine, he makes his living as a fake medium, fortune teller etc., and at first treats her predicament lightly. But when, the following day, one of his elderly lady clients is elevated during a

Tarot card reading and flung headfirst down the stairs to her death he begins to realize that something very peculiar is going on.

Meanwhile the operation to remove the lump runs into problems. The surgeon finds himself unable to cut into Karen's flesh with his scalpel and when he persists he is driven to slice his own wrist instead. The doctors don't give up and next attempt to destroy the growth with a laser beam—but this time the unseen force takes control of the device and causes it to burn holes in everything around it (except Karen).

Harry decides, despite his scepticism in such matters, that a super-natural force is at work (mind like a steel trap, he has). First he tries to discover the truth at a seance but this only produces a ghostly manifestation (a hideous head rising up through the solid table) followed by a bolt of lightning through the window which effectively brings the proceedings to an abrupt end. Next he goes to an anthropolo-

gist who is an expert on Indian folk-lore (*Burgess Meredith* in yet another of horror film cameos) who tells him that certain Indian medicine men had the power to be reborn again and again, becoming more powerful each time until they achieved a form of godhood. The manner of their rebirth involved taking over the body of some unfortunate girl and manifesting themselves, to begin with, as a lump on some part of their anatomy...

Harry then enlists the aid of a modern-day medicine man, John Singingrock (*Michael Ansara*) who informs him that Karen is in the grip of the most powerful medicine man of them all—*Misquamacus*—who has been born several times before and is reaching the peak of his power (one wonders why his previous incarnations didn't attract any attention, and why the manitou should automatically be considered an evil force).

The climax of the movie, and its highlight, consists of a duel in the hospital between Singingrock and *Misquamacus*, after the latter has succeeded in emerging,

messily, from Karen's back (despite his great powers the manitou appears as a mishapen dwarf—the reason being that the x-rays stunted his growth!) Lightning crashes, an earthquake shakes the building, machines explode, a giant lizard is materialised, a doctor is de-skinned and a whole hospital floor is transformed into an ice cavern. Finally the manitou transports Karen's hospital room into another dimen-

ience. One could say that the film is a success because of its exhilarating bad taste...

The Manitou is based on a novel by English writer Graham Masterton, and written and directed by William Girdler. His previous films include *Asylum of Satan* (1971), *Abby* (1974), *Grizzly* (1975) and *The Day of the Animals* (1976), all of which were cheap, exploitation productions and not very impressive (I thought that *Grizzly*, a

rip-off of *Jaws*, was one of the most boring films I'd ever fidgeted through). But **The Manitou** was the first film on which Girdler had a reasonable budget to work with (about three million dollars) and as a result he was able to demonstrate a visual flair that I wouldn't have suspected he possessed, judging from his other work. It would have been interesting to see what he would have done next to top *The Manitou* but, tragic-



sion and seems to have won the battle but then Singingrock invokes an entity called The Great Old One who, using Karen as a focus for his powers, takes the duel to an even more spectacular level...

There are a lot of obvious flaws in *The Manitou*—it's basically very silly (it's hard to take a midget medicine man seriously), it's too slow in places, it lacks an internal logic, the dialogue is often embarrassing and the actual direction lacks polish (the director introduces almost every new scene with a tedious slow pan across something), but in the long run none of this matters because the movie succeeds in being *entertaining*. What really saves it, and lifts it out of the ordinary run of imitation *Exorcist* movies, is the last 30 minutes involving the birth of the creature and the subsequent duel. Here the writer/director wisely threw constraint to the wind and went all the way. The result is a mind-blowing barrage of special effects, each one more outrageous than the last. These, coupled with a Dolby-assisted soundtrack, add up to a memorable cinematic experi-

Above: *The eyes of the manitou—Misquamacus.*
Below: Tony Curtis in one of his familiar con-man roles as the fake medium, Harry Erskine.



ally, he was killed in January, 1978, in a helicopter crash while scouting locations for a new film in the Philippines... so we'll never know.

Wisely, Girdler spent much of his three million dollar budget for *The Manitou* on the optical and physical special effects and also on the make-up. In charge of the latter were Tom Burman and Joe McKinney; Burman had the job of creating the manitou itself which consisted of a midget actor and several pounds of latex rubber. The diminutive actor (Felix Silla) was wearing more make-up appliances than any other actor has before in a movie. Actually, there were two midgets involved—a smaller man (Joe Gieb) was used in the actual birth sequence where the manitou is seen to appear out of the mock-womb on Ms Strasberg's back, and the larger for the scenes after the birth.

Gene Grigg and Tim Smythe handled the mechanical effects and one of their major tasks was the creation of the "ice cave" within the hospital set. The temperature in the studio was taken down to about 15



Above: The face of Karen (Susan Strasberg) is distorted with pain as the hand of the 400 year-old medicine man rips through her back during the birth scene. Below: A special effects man puts the finishing touches to the "growth" on Susan Strasberg's back.

degrees and the floor of the set was then covered with water to create real ice. A great deal of fibre-glass ice and fake snow was also used to complete the effect. What with that and the fog and wind machines, working conditions on the set were difficult. Even more hazardous were the various exploding machinery—computers, etc. . . . An exploding IBM typewriter sent pieces of

metal spinning across the set, but fortunately the cameramen and crew had taken the precaution of filming the scene within a protective box.

Optical effects men Dale Tate and Frank Van Der Veer (who worked on *Star Wars*) were responsible for the most spectacular sequences in the movie—those at the very end when the manitou has created a space/

time warp and the doorway into Karen's room appears to open into a starry vista apparently stretching to infinity. Tate and Van Der Veer, using such specialist techniques as the blue screen process, animation and optical superimposition, created this and other effects which included *The Great Old One* (an abstract shape of swirling colours), fireballs and the unforgettable sight of a half-naked Susan Strasberg sitting up in bed and sending lightning bolts hurtling from her finger-tips!

The late William Girdler won't go down in cinema history as one of the all-time greats but, at least, with *The Manitou*, he's left behind a fun movie that will ensure his name will be remembered.



The Manitou (1978)

Tony Curtis (as *Harry Erskine*), Susan Strasberg (*Karen Tandy*), Jon Cedar (*Dr Jack Hughes*), Michael Ansara (*John Singing Rock*), Stella Stevens (*Amelia Crusoe*), Burgess Meredith (*Dr Ernest Snow*), Paul Mantel (*Dr Robert McEnvoy*), Lurene Tuttle (*Mrs Hertz*), Hugh Corcoran (*Mac Arthur Crusoe*).

Written and Directed by William Girdler, Mechanical Effects by Gene Grigg and Tim Saythe, Optical Effects by Dale Tate and Frank Van Der Veer, Physical Effects by Tom Burman and Joe McKinney, Executive Producer Melvin Gordy. Distributed by Enterprise Pictures Ltd.

Time: 105 mins.

Cert: X

Maya Merchandising

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February 1979: Includes Corben (colour) Moebius, Macedo, McKie

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EXCLUSIVE FEATURE

INFINITY

Special Report by Alan Murdoch

"This picture is going to be so huge in its concept that it will make *Close Encounters* seem like amateur night at the local film society."—Henry E. Goldblum, Producer.

There have been very few films that can be described as spectacular—either in their concept or in their execution.

2001: A Space Odyssey can be placed in this category—so can *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. But it seems that in the past such movies only appeared at the rate of

relatively little-known but prestigious team to create perhaps one of the most ambitious movies in the history of the cinema. Director James Blacksmith scripts from an original concept by Goldblum. "After all", says Goldblum, "if God can create the Universe in six days on His budget we can do it in six months on ours!"

James Blacksmith told us that the film was almost complete and only needed a few minor special effects to wrap up shooting so that the editing process could begin.

Blacksmith is one of the new wave of Australian film directors that is making such a tremendous impact on world cinema. As a young aborigine, Blacksmith found the world of film-making a tough nut to crack, but his perseverance and talent won through. It was while he was working as a film critic on a provincial Australian newspaper that Blacksmith found backers for his first movie, *Night of the Wallaby*, which he both wrote and directed. The film opened in the Sydney suburbs almost unnoticed,



Producer, Henry E. Goldblum, and associate producer, Stanley B. Goldblum (standing).

one per decade. Now, with only one year having passed since Spielberg unveiled his *magnum opus* before an incredulous world comes news of a successor, an American/Australian production with the working title *Infinity*.

Hollywood sources have reported that completed footage on the film is nothing short of staggering. The first twenty minutes of the movie depict, in miraculous detail, the Creation of the Universe. From a black void the audience sees the formation of stars, solar systems, indeed whole galaxies. Those who have seen the Creation sequence have been astounded by the clarity and comprehension of it all. There is little doubt that just this sequence surpasses anything to have come out of Hollywood special effects shops so far.

The picture is being made by a small company called BFN Productions. BFN chief Henry E. Goldblum has assembled a



A rare behind-the-scenes shot of Blacksmith's regular cameraman, Leitz Wetzlar, lining up a camera angle during the filming of *Cult of the Blue Boomerang*.

but grossed sufficient receipts for his backers to finance his next film. It was after the opening of this new Blacksmith offering that the critics began to take notice. Practically overnight Blacksmith's *Cult of the Blue Boomerang* acquired a cult following of its own. But still Blacksmith was making acutely personal films. Both these early classics concerned the struggle of young aborigine characters to make good in Australian society. While the films were perceptual *tour de force* of social commentary Blacksmith had yet to direct a commercial film.

The tide turned when Blacksmith wrote his first sf movie script. *60 Million Miles to Woomera* was the corny-sounding but technically brilliant tale of a young aborigine space pilot making the lonely fuel run to the outer planets. The film was made on a shoe-string budget of three hundred thousand Australian dollars but it grossed in excess of three million dollars on Australian sales alone.

It was after seeing *60 Million Miles to Woomera* that Henry E. Goldblum became interested in Blacksmith's work. Goldblum had been entertaining a concept for an sf movie that would push the limitations of the cinema screen to a breaking point and needed a writer/director to expand on these concepts.

"Harry Goldblum had seen my *Woomera* movie whilst visiting relatives in Canberra. While he felt that the picture might have been a bit too esoteric for a worldwide audience he liked the ideas and my general handling of the picture."

We asked Blacksmith to fill us in on some of the details of the new project.

"Well frankly, I'm amazed that we have progressed this far into the project without the world catching on that something was going on. Certainly security has been tight but while BFN Productions aren't exactly MGM we're big enough that when we decide to make a film of this enormity

people should notice. The number of people working on the Creation sequence alone should have made the secret hard to keep."

And how much did the sequence cost to film?

"Well, it cost nearly as much as the entire budget for an average movie but the end result justifies the cost. The sequence puts 2001's journey through the Star Gate and CE3K's mothership scenes to shame! The rest of the film concerns the rise and fall

thought I was unemployed. My wife thought I was still doing commercials for anti-acid pills. But now it's all on film I feel proud of my contribution."

Finally we contacted Goldblum in his New York office last week. Goldblum said though he had been working on the project for almost a year the original ideas go back much further. "I found the best technicians and film people in the world to make this picture. I found the best actors and actresses



A little-seen still from James Blacksmith's third film, the science fiction classic, *60 Million Miles to Woomera*.

of a council of female humans who evolve to become Guardians of the Universe and achieve near-omnipotence. The effects throughout the film are of colossal scope. Nobody could accuse us of playing our best cards first by opening the film with the creation sequence. Hank Harvard's effects are brilliant!"

Staggering stuff indeed. We tracked down the man behind the Creation of the Universe Hank Harvard. Though little-known in cinema circles Hank Harvard has been turning out special effects commercials for American tv for almost ten years. Harvard's best known and best executed commercial is a thirty second trip around the human digestive tract to advertise indigestion tablets and is regarded by many as a masterpiece.

Harvard told us that the security on the picture had been so tight at first that he hadn't even been allowed to speak to his wife about the film.

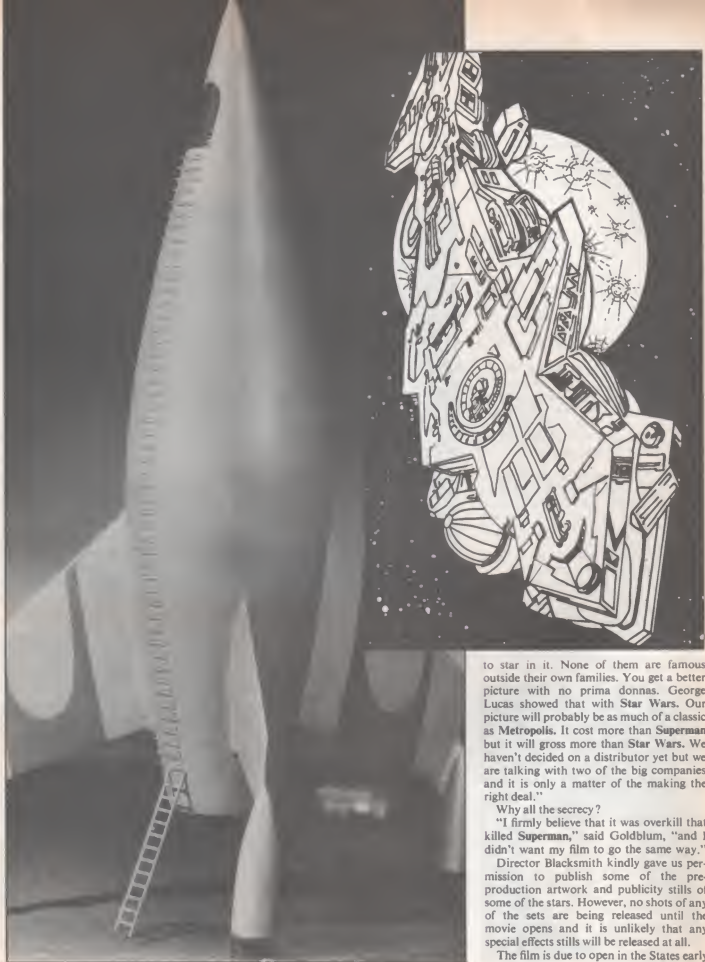
"I was working on the Creation sequence for nearly six months without being able to talk to anyone about it. My neighbours



Special effects director, Hank Harvard, discusses a design concept with an assistant on the roof of his California workshop.



Ex-model, Donna Leigh, was signed by the Goldblums for the starring role in *Infinity*.



The visuals for *60 Million Miles to Woomera* (above) appear a little dated when seen alongside a production sketch from *Infinity*.

to star in it. None of them are famous outside their own families. You get a better picture with no prima donnas. George Lucas showed that with *Star Wars*. Our picture will probably be as much of a classic as *Metropolis*. It cost more than *Superman* but it will gross more than *Star Wars*. We haven't decided on a distributor yet but we are talking with two of the big companies and it is only a matter of the making the right deal."

Why all the secrecy?

"I firmly believe that it was overkill that killed *Superman*," said Goldblum, "and I didn't want my film to go the same way."

Director Blacksmith kindly gave us permission to publish some of the pre-production artwork and publicity stills of some of the stars. However, no shots of any of the sets are being released until the movie opens and it is unlikely that any special effects stills will be released at all.

The film is due to open in the States early next year.

We can hardly wait!

Starburst Letters

I am a great fan of Dr. Who and Blake's 7 so when I was told about your article with Terry Nation in *Starburst* 6, I treated myself to a copy. John Fleming's interview was good except for the fact that Dr. Who's adventure, *Genesis of the Daleks* was said to have had the Doctor falling off a cliff and a girl getting her foot trapped in a railway line. In the 1978 story by Robert Holmes, *The Deadly Assassin*, the Doctor fell down a cliff and got his foot trapped in a railway point in front of an oncoming train. Incidentally, pen 6's second photo was of the Doctor, Susan and Ian getting cornered by Daleks. Another point is that Dr. Who is the name of the programme and the main character is 'the Doctor'.

The *Complete Dalek Index* was a let-down as someone had very carefully read *The Dr. Who Special* or Target's issue of *The Making of Doctor Who* and re-written the information. Many of the facts are incorrect and the list should read as follows:

First Season, 1963-64

Episodes 5 to 12. The original Doctor Who season was only meant to run for 13 episodes. The first four were about stone age savages and the next seven were about the Daleks. The Dead Planet was, in fact, the first episode of this story, the subsequent ones being *The Survivors*, *The Escape*, *Ambush*, *The Expedition*, *The Ordeal* and *The Rescue*. The war on Skaro was a neutronic one and although Ian and Barbara, the first two companions, were human, Susan stayed in the first episode that she was born in another time on another world.

Second Season, 1964-65

Dalek Invasion Earth. The first episode of this story was *World's End* the subsequent ones being *The Daleks*, *The Day of Reckoning*, *The End of Tomorrow*, *The Waking Ally* and *Flashpoint*. The "Dalek Leader" was, in fact, the Black Dalek or the Dalek Supreme. The Dalek saucer was perked at Chelsea Heliport. The story actually took place in 2167.

The Space Museum. (4 episodes by Glyn Jones). Whilst at the Morok equivalent of creatures, the Doctor saw and rode in a Dalek.

The Chase. The first episode here was *The Executioners*. The following episodes were *The Death of Time*, *Flight Through Eternity*, *Journey into Terror*, *The Death of Doctor Who*, and *The Planet of Decision*.

Third Season, 1965-66

Mission to the Unknown was not the re-introduction to the season, and was preceded by a four episode adventure, *Galaxy 4*.

The Dalek Master Plan. Terry Nation wrote this story with Dennis Spooner. The first episode was *The Nightmare Begins*, which was followed by *The Day of Armageddon*, *The Devil's Planet*, *The Traitors*, *Counter-Plot*, *Coronets of the Sun*, *The Feast of Steven*, *Volcano*, *Golden Death*, *Escape Switch*, *Abandoned Planet*, and *Destruction of Time*.

Dennis Spooner's previous story was *The Time Meddler*, again Terry Nation wrote episode 1. The SSS agent was Sar (not Sarah) Kingdom.

Fourth Season, 1966-67

All the information was correct and the Dalek Emperor was the leader in Evil. Subtitles for episodes had been dropped.

Fifth Season, 1968-69

The War Games. (10 episodes by Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke) In the closing episode, a Dalek was amongst the creatures present at the Doctor's trial. *Eighth Season, 1971*

The Mind of Evil. (6 episodes by Don Houghton) In episode 2, the Master created images of the Doctor's adversaries to scare him, one being a Dalek.

Ninth Season, 1972

The Day of the Daleks. The bomb Shura used was a Dalekenium bomb.

Tenth Season, 1972/3

Frontier in Space. (6 episodes by Malcolm Hulke) In Episode 6, a squad of Daleks emerged to be the

controllers of the Master and the Ogrons who were trying to start a war between Draconians and Humans. The Dalek squad escaped so the Doctor followed them to the planet of Sipsidon.

Planet of the Spiders. All information correct.

The Day of the Daleks. A couple of months after this series, this story was reshown as a one hour compilation.

Eleventh Season, 1973-74

Death to the Daleks. All information correct.

Twelfth Season, 1974-75

Genesis of the Daleks. All information correct.

Thirteenth Season, 1975-76

Genesis of the Daleks. In mid-season, this story was repeated as a one hour compilation.

Terry Nation also wrote two other stories for the Dr. Who series.

The Keys of Marinus. The first episode of this story was *The Sea of Death*, followed by *The Velvet Web*, *The Screaming Jungle*, *The Snows of Terror*, *Sentence of Death* and *The Keys of Marinus*. Not only the Doctor, but Barbara, Ian, Susan, Arblin's daughter Sabetha, her friend Atros, and his friend Ekrim. The Doctor only held the fifth key as Sabetha had the second, third and fourth and Arblin, the first. Sabetha handed her key's over and Arblin's was stolen, but it was Ian who handed over a fake that he had found.

The Android Invasion. (4 episodes by Terry Nation). The Kraits of Davidson created a replica of an English village which they inhabited with Android duplicates of the villagers. They were then sent to Earth to release a deadly virus to kill all humans.

These stories were in the first and thirteenth series. I hope that I have put you right on a few things that were incorrect. I hope your magazine also does well and you have another feature on Doctor Who or Blake's 7 soon.

Andrew Pixley, Sheffield, Yorks.

To be honest, Andrew, you were not the only one to catch some of the mistakes in the Dalek Index. Others to take us to task were: *Prisadad of the Doctor Who Appreciation Society*, Jan Vincent Rodzki and Julian Knott. But your information was the most detailed and best the record straight once and for all.

I have been looking through some old editions of some of my favourite science fiction comics. Marvel's *Planet of the Apes*. In this comic the Apes saga was serialised in comic strip form. I was thinking that, in the style of *Horus of Hammer* you could try this idea of adapting sci-fi books and films for comic strip serialisation. Maybe this sort of comic strip would be more successful than the short strips that ran in earlier issues of *Starburst*, such as *Spacewar* and *Litterbug*. Some of the artwork in the Marvel range of comics is really exciting and the addition of a strip would push *Starburst* way ahead in the field.

David Goodchild, Aylesbury, Bucks.

There is a rumour around, David, that suggests *Marvel* are considering bringing out a new magazine that would lean more in this direction rather than changing the format of *Starburst*, thereby fragmenting the established readership.

Living here in New Zealand, I feel as deserted and away from the centre of things as Luke Skywalker did on Tatooine and I must thank you most sincerely for the enjoyment *Starburst* gives me. Your interview with Harrison Ford (Han Solo in *Star Wars*) was the very best I've read - and believe me I've read quite a few - and if your magazine keeps up such a standard you will have at least one addicted buyer here on the other side of the planet.

Articles like John Boorman's *Martin and Tolkien* on *Film* as in number 4 will keep me blissfully happy but

material on *Battlestar: Galactica* and of course *Star Wars* would be even better. In fact if you keep reprinting your interview with Harrison Ford I'll keep buying it . . . not that you'll want to bore your serious science fiction readers with satisfying my deluded mind. I have just one comment to make. Please remember that some of your younger readers just won't be conversant with science fiction classics on film and TV because they weren't mature enough to appreciate them when they were originally showing even supposing they were old enough to see them at all. Keep that in mind and you'll have a great magazine - even greater than it is at present!!

Samantha Blackley, Wellington, New Zealand

Glad you enjoy *Starburst*, Samantha. We didn't even know that our magazine was as well travelled as it appears to be.

Is *Superman* really worth its Special Effects Academy Award? Excluding John Barry's sets and Zoran Peric's Zoptics, are they not really shabby? The illusion of *Superman* flying is spoilt in his first appearance by the wire being visible amidst the whiteness of the Fortress of Solitude; plastic nuclear missiles looking every bit false; the missiles and *Superman* being very much out of proportion. But perhaps the worst of these effects are the explosion of krypton and the bursting of the Boulder Dam.

Not knowing how the explosion of krypton was done I'd guess that an explosion was triggered in a box-like chamber. This chamber is clearly visible in the film. As for the bursting of the dam, isn't it a tragedy that the miniatures are really false-looking? The wire which crosses the screen from left to right tugging at the concrete should have ended up on the cutting room floor rather than in the finished film. When the sequence is compared to the similar one in *Force Ten from Navarone* it makes one wonder who should have got the award. Even Hooper, with its array of stunts, was better.

This isn't the Academy's first slip-up. They committed a similar sin with *King Kong*, a movie which prompted Jim Danforth to resign from the committee. Is it only big-budget films that are allowed to win awards? Surely Ray Harryhausen is long overdue for an Oscar?

Michael Jordan, Rochdale, Lancs.

This is not the first time we have heard this sort of complaint, Michael. But now we intend to give *Starburst* readers the chance to do something about the situation. In collaboration with the organisers of the *British Fantasy Film Convention*, *Starburst* is organising the *Fantasy Film Awards*. Only films/TV shows with a 1978 British release/first airing date will be eligible. The Awards are divided into two sections: films and TV shows. Each section will have the following categories: Best Film/TV Show, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Newcomer, Best Special Effects, Best Music, Best Screenplay, Best Director and two "Hall of Fame" categories—Best Movie/TV Show of All Time and Outstanding Achievement by an Individual in the Fantasy Film Field.

Please get your nominations to us at *Starburst* as soon as possible and we will publish the nomination results for the 1978 Fantasy Film Awards in *Starburst* 10 whereupon readers can vote for their favourites in each category. The final results will be announced/presented at the *Fantasy Film Convention*, 15/16 September 1979, and published in a later issue of *Starburst*.

Send all comments and queries to us at:
STARBURST LETTERS,
Jedwin House,
205-211 Kentish Town Road,
London NW5.

The Starburst Interview

Gerry Anderson

-from Supercar, to Thunderbirds, to Space 1999

Producer Gerry Anderson is best known for *Thunderbirds* and *Space 1999*, but his career dates back 23 years; it includes thirteen TV series and three feature films. For sixteen of those years, he worked for the expansive (Lord) Lew Grade, boss of ATV and its subsidiary ITC. The ending of that long working relationship seems to have left at least a trace of bitterness.

Anderson is a Londoner. He was born on 14th April 1929 in West Hampstead and educated in Kilburn, then Neasden—"I lived in Neasden," he says. "What can I say? I can't deny it." His father supplied cigarette machines which ordinary people kept in their living rooms. The business was literally run from a cupboard under the stairs. Anderson Sr acquired customers by knocking on doors and asking, "Would you like this French-polished cigarette machine in your house?"

One of young Gerry's first ambitions was to be an architect. In fact, he says, he would still like to design his own house but, whenever he's had the money he's had no time... and whenever he's had time he's had no money. In his early days, he went to Building School and studied plastering. However, after an accident, he discovered he was allergic to plaster. So he went to work in a photographer's studio in Regent Street and became interested in the visual medium.

He soon moved on to the post-war Colonial Film Unit at the Ministry of Information. He says that was "when we still had a British Empire—Before Lew Grade bought it all." After that, Anderson moved to Gainsborough Pictures (at what is now BBC Line Grove Studios). He worked in the cutting rooms on *The Wicked Lady*, *So Long at the Fair*, *Jancy*, *Caravan* and various other movies.

At this point, he was called up for National Service with the RAF and (he claims) his IQ was so low he "was offered the choice of the cookhouse or the military police". In fact, he became a radio telephone operator, guiding aeroplanes in to land—this started his interest in flying.

After military service, he returned to the film industry and worked as a sound editor at

Pinewood Studios, where director Lewis Milestone gave him the advice: "It's impossible to please everybody, so please yourself". Anderson says: "I've tried to follow that advice without any success at all."

Spreading his wings, he went to a small company, Polytechnic Films of Maidenhead. He worked for them on a series of documentaries about unusual people—A man in Austria who lived for a year in a bottle... A woman who could type in ten languages simultaneously... A man who hypnotised crocodiles. The series was called *You've Never Seen This*. No-one did; the company went bankrupt.



He stayed in Maidenhead to form A.P. Films with Arthur Provis in 1955. Their premises were a disused ballroom at Islet Park and, eventually, they were commissioned to make a 52-part series for the newly-created ITV. It was only after they agreed to the project that Anderson and Provis discovered it was to be a puppet series: *The Adventures of Twizle*. This led on to *Torchy the Battery Boy*, then *Four Feather Falls* for Granada TV (with Nicholas Parsons as the voice of Tex Tucker).

These series proved a success, so the Anderson company moved to a factory on the Slough industrial Trading Estate. There they made

Supercar for Lew Grade's ATV. That was followed by *Fireball XL-5*, the only Anderson series to be networked in the US. Following that success, Lew Grade told Anderson, "I am going to buy your company". First series after the take-over was *Slingray*, which was also the first British TV film series made in colour. Then there was the world-wide success of *Thunderbirds*. Followed by what Anderson calls the "tragic error" of *Captain Scarlet*—The heads and bodies were made in realistic proportion to each other, so the puppets stopped being caricatures and this, he thinks, was unacceptable to the viewers. Anderson's last two Supermarionation series were *Joe 90* and *The Secret Service*. He then went into live-action with *UFO*, *The Protectors* and *Space 1999*.

But, for all this success, Gerry Anderson is not a totally happy man. He's had great success and everyone can understand success. But he's also had sudden commercial failures which, to this day, he cannot explain. Also, three years ago, his marriage to Sylvia Anderson broke up. It happened between the two series of *Space 1999*—a show which must itself have been tiring because of the much-publicised production and front-office problems. Since then, in his own words, he has been "marking time". His company Gerry Anderson Marketing currently has the lucrative European merchandising rights to pop group Abba. Last year, he also made a Supermarionation TV ad *Allen Attack* for Jiff Dessert Topping—the only ad he has done apart from three award-winning ones for Blue Cars (a travel agent) in the late 1950s.

Starburst interviewed Gerry Anderson in his office at Pinewood, the studios where he worked after National Service and where *Space 1999* was shot. He is a surprisingly quiet man who is very polite and whose apparent policy in interviews is to be as helpful, honest and open as possible. He talks quietly and reasonably slowly, as if choosing his words carefully. Presumably, he is a man made wary by a great deal of contact with media corporations. He worked with Lew Grade and ATV/ITC for sixteen years and, as he says, "sometimes it's better to be a big cog in a small machine, rather than a small cog in a big machine".

Interview conducted by John Fleming

Starburst: At last year's Fantasy Film Convention, you said *Thunderbirds* was the highlight of your career to date.

Anderson: Well, I think I would probably stand by that statement. When I was making *Thunderbirds*, it was not the highlight of my career. It was a terrible chore with horrible little puppets whose strings kept on breaking and whose eyes went cross-eyed and it constantly shortened my life. We got

very little footage in the bag every day. It was a long, laborious, painful process. There were many films that didn't work and were weeks in the cutting rooms being repaired and new shots being made. So, at the time, I think my attitude was that puppets were a pain and the quicker I get out of this the better. But, looking back, people would say: "Gerry Anderson—*Thunderbirds*," and there would immedi-

tely be a crowd wanting autographs. That series brought me real fame. I think it did more for me than anything before or since. *Lew Grade changed his mind about the format, didn't he?*

I think really what happened is that he ordered a half-hour show and, when we delivered the pilot, it was such a fast-moving, unusual and action-packed show that he obviously screened it to a few people



and somebody must have said, "What a shame it isn't an hour!" So he called me up and said: "Can you turn it into an hour?" And I said: "Look! We've completed the first one. We've got eight more shot. We've got about six more scripted! My God!" But he has a marvellous way with him inasmuch as he puts his arm round you and he says: "Y'know, Gerry, I have such faith in you! I know that if I told you it meant a lot to me, you somehow or other would do it." How can you resist that? So we did it. *And the three US Networks bid for it, but didn't screen it.*

I was not present at the meetings. I have never been involved in the sale of the programmes and therefore I don't know the whole story. But certainly Lew went to America and came back with two of the three Networks having made an offer for it. When he got back to London Airport, he was tannoyed and when he went to the telephone it was the other Network saying they wanted to bid for it as well. I don't know what happened, but the deal fell through. Since this is going into print, I can only speculate. Whether he asked too much money or whether they had second thoughts or whether there are some politics I'm simply not aware of. I don't know the reason, but I know that one Network dropped out and then, of course, panic set in. "I wonder why they've dropped out!" - and the next one went and then *bang* all three went. And that was tragic. I say tragic for me - I mean, it must have been tragic for Lew. Let's face it, he must have been bitterly upset about it.

You made two Thunderbirds feature films which seemed to be quite successful.

They weren't successful. They were terrible failures.

How did they get financial backing?

Lew had made *Thunderbirds Are Go* on spec. United Artists saw it and picked it up immediately. They were so impressed with the picture. David Picker who, at the time, was with United Artists, when the lights went up turned to me and said, "Whatever subject you want to make, Mr Anderson, it's yours." When it went out for its premiere, Piccadilly was blocked. It caused more of a stir in Piccadilly than the *Abba* premiere. It was a wonderful premiere and it was absolutely packed. Everybody

cheered and I remember leaving the cinema and the manager said, "You get a picture like this and they start queuing up at four o'clock in the morning". We went back to the Hilton, where they'd made all the vehicles in ice - a fabulous party. The head of UA at the time said to me, "I don't know whether it's going to make more money than Bond or not. I can't decide". I was sitting there (thinking I was) already a millionaire. I mean, all these experienced people: how could they all be wrong? The next day, the Dominion, Tottenham Court Road (a large London cinema) had about ten people in it.

"Lew Grade had made Thunderbirds Are Go on spec. United Artists saw it and picked it up immediately."

How was it promoted?

Well, I made a film called *Doppelgänger* with Universal which had lousy promotion. But, I've got to be fair about this, *Thunderbirds Are Go* was superbly promoted. The Dominion had all the vehicles made in fluorescent lights - a fantastic display. It was well-advertised. It went out over

Christmas. But it failed. And I went to my local cinema and there were like five people in the back row and three down the front and that was it.

So why did they make Thunderbirds 6?

I think the reason they made a second film was that nobody could believe that this thing had failed. They didn't know what the mistake was but somewhere there was a mistake. Perhaps it was the wrong story. Perhaps it was released at the wrong time of year. Perhaps they built it up too much in the minds of the potential audience. I don't know. Anyway, they had to try again. They tried again and the same thing happened.

Why did your film Doppelgänger have its title changed for the American market?





film sound rather unusual. But it failed in Britain and America. Which goes to prove something or other. I'm not sure what it proves, but it certainly proves something. **Doppelganger** got nasty reviews. 'Puppets without strings' reviews.

Well, generally speaking, I think critics (pause) like to write clever lines of dialogue. And some subjects make it all too easy. What a great line – "The actors are wooden . . . Gerry was pulling the strings" and so on. (Pause) I don't think that their criticism was unfounded, I just think it was wildly out of proportion.

*"I made a film called **Doppelganger** with 13 puppets which had lousy promotion."*

Doppelganger was live-action. You were



*Above: One of the excellent Eagle models from the live action tv series **Space 1999**. Inset above: Lady Penelope and Alan Tracy from the **Thunderbirds** series. Inset below: Thunderbird 1 in the launch bay*



Well, you know, I'm not too anxious to knock the Americans on this one. I thought **Doppelganger** was a fabulous title. A friend of mine thought of it and I thought it was a very, very good show, but I'm not exactly sure the Americans aren't right inasmuch as they try very hard to get an immediacy into their titles, which gives you an idea of what it is you're going to see. And, rightly or wrongly, they felt that the average person would not understand the title **Doppelganger**. So they changed it to **Journey to the Far Side of the Sun**. The interesting thing about the whole exercise is that I insisted that it should be called **Doppelganger** over here because I thought it was an interesting word and, if people didn't understand what it meant, they would find out. It made the

trying the same thing on tv with **UFO**.

Yes
Was that because you had saturated the market for tv puppet series? You were competing with re-runs of your own series? Well, I think we had saturated the market and I think Lew knew that I wanted to do live-action. I think people were beginning to say, "Lew, you can do this with puppets if you can do it with live-action . . . You can clean up!" And so we did **UFO** and, like a lot of things, it was ahead of its time. I think if it was in production today with all these **UFO** sightings going on, it would be marvellous. We had a bit of bad luck on **UFO** because there were a lot of sightings at the time but, when the programme was halfway through being shot, the US Army

Air Force issued the findings of an inquiry they'd been conducting for about two years. And they said categorically *there are no UFOs*. It did tend to kill interest in the subject for quite a long time.

UFO almost went into a second series, I believe.

Well, the second series was really *Space 1999*.

And that was refused by all three US Networks despite its very high production values. Why?

I think the reason is all too clear now. (Pause) It was 'serious' science fiction. On the other hand, so was *Star Trek*. But, you know, *Star Trek* got away with it because of (studio) politics. A studio (*Desilu*) was sold to a Network (*NBC*) and part of the condition was that they bought *Star Trek* with it. Then they took it off the air and 12,000 fans – who were probably the only people who watched it in the States – went to NBC and demanded its return. And then it became a cult show. But, I mean, it never had high ratings ever.

It's a show all on its own. I think *Space 1999* suffered from being British.

It didn't get networked in Britain either. Why do you think that was?

I don't know the answer to that. I wish you could tell me.

Well, at the time, programme planners for regional ITV companies were very jealously guarding their control over films and film

started. If you don't get simultaneous networking, then the newspapers aren't interested in commenting; if they don't comment, people don't watch; it's like the hoola hoola bird going in ever-decreasing circles until you disappear up your own channel.

I read somewhere that the original stars of Space 1999 were to have been Katharine Ross and Robert Culp.

Not Katharine Ross. Robert Culp was interviewed. We met in Beverly Hills. I'm a great fan of his because he's a very, very competent actor and has a very great charisma. He arrived and I said, "Right, I'll tell you what the series is about . . ." And

"The *Star Trek* models were nowhere near as good as ours and their exteriors were nowhere near as convincing."

he said, "Look, before you tell me what the series is about, may I say a couple of things?" So I said, "Certainly". He said, "First of all, I am a superb actor." And I said, "Yes, that's why we've invited you over here." He said, "Fine. But what is not generally known is that I am also an outstanding writer". So I said, "Well that, I must confess, I didn't know". And he said, "Finally, I am an even better director." Now all of those statements may well be

I felt that this would be a great danger and so, very politely, I said, "Thank you very much and goodbye". And, equally politely, he said, "Thank you very much. Goodbye." We didn't have any kind of argument. I respected his point of view. Whether he respected me, I don't know. But the interview terminated there.

Isaac Asimov criticised Space 1999 for unscientific details. Did you take that seriously?

Yes. I think that a show that is absolutely scientifically correct can be as dull as ditch-water. But I think the point he was making was that, if you are going deep into the universe, then you can say whatever you like and that's fine; but if you're dealing with subjects that we have up-to-date knowledge on, like the Moon, then you ought to be correct. I thought that was a reasonable criticism. But I think the problem with scientific advisers is that, if you had had a scientific adviser in 1820, he would have told you that it was impossible to fly and to travel beyond the speed of sound. And today they're telling us that it's impossible to travel beyond the speed of light. I think, therefore, they are inhibiting (to a production) and since the heading is science fiction – underline the word fiction – I don't really think there's any place for them.

The series did have very high production values. Did they have to be so high? You could have got away with less and only the professionals would have noticed, not the average viewer.

I think that's a very fair question. But we had always built and maintained our reputation on quality and it is very difficult to say to a man: "Do three-quarters of your best". Psychologically, you either say, "This is for tv: we can't see the details so any old rubbish will do," or you say, "Do your best". And that's what represented their best. Now, the *Star Trek* models, in my view, were nowhere near as good as ours and their exterior scenes were nowhere near as convincing as ours, but I don't think anyone had given them the brief to "Do 75% or 50% of your best because it's for television". In fact, I think some of their models were twenty feet long. I think we had damn good people, that's all.

Better than American technicians?

I don't think that we're better than the Americans. I think we were better equipped because, for many years, any special effects pictures generally came here because the rates of pay were much lower and it was cheaper to produce. Therefore their people hadn't had the experience. But I think that, once science fiction became the thing, the Americans very quickly learned how to do it.

That poster on your wall's for the new Space 1999 film, is it?

Destination – Moonbase Alpha, I think is damn good entertainment, particularly for people who like science fiction. What I think is a great shame is that here we have



Space 1999 took a lot of criticism for its stories and scientific flaws though most fans agree that the special effects were superior.

series. There was a lot of resistance over networking film series.

I really don't know. When I see some of the rubbish that is networked . . .

It was shoved away into Saturday morning slots on some ITV stations.

Well, I think we were killed before we even

true. But, knowing what television production means, where you've got one picture a fortnight going through – one hour every ten days – in my view the lead artist hasn't got the time or the physical strength to cope with leading the series and be involved with the writing and also criticise the direction.

Superman on screen with its \$50 million or whatever budget, *Close Encounters* with its \$20 million budget. We've got some mighty expensive pictures on the screen at the moment. Even *Star Wars* was almost \$10 million when it was made and probably now the same picture would be \$25 million. With *Destination - Moonbase Alpha* we have two television episodes (*Bringers of Wonder, parts 1 and 2*) strung together and the title reads *Sir Lew Grade Presents a Gerry Anderson Production* and it doesn't say it's two television episodes strung together. The damage it does is that people who've seen all these (other) fabulous pictures now go and see that and say, "I would've expected something a bit better than that from Gerry Anderson."

I've heard you say you'd like to move more into theatrical presentations.

Well, hopefully I'll never see television again. That means if I were offered a good television series this afternoon I would crack a bottle of champagne and celebrate and do it and love every minute of it. But it is such a terrible strain, producing one hour a week, that I would much prefer to do theatrical - that is cinema - pictures. At the time of this interview, I'm at the point of a very, very big breakthrough. Unfortunately, I can't tell you what it's about or who's involved because it could spoil the chances of the picture going.

Is it for a studio or for an independent?

It is a major subject with a major studio, a major director and a major star. And a fantasy subject. We're right on the knife-edge at the moment.

If it works out, you'll be producing again. Why do you produce rather than direct?

I always wanted to direct and I made the fatal mistake of thinking if I start my own film company and I'm making my own pictures, when it comes to the director, I will be able to direct. That's how I hoped to become a director. Instead of which, you find you are so busy organising production that, when it comes to the crunch, you have to take somebody else on because you can't handle it yourself.

"It is such a terrible strain, producing one hour per week for tv. I'd much prefer to do cinema pictures."

You have directed, though.

When we first started, I directed 26 *Twizzles*, 26 *Torchys*, 52 *Four Feather Falls*, the pilot of *UFO* - I've directed an awful lot of our stuff.

Do you think you're a bankable director?

No, certainly not. Because most of the films I've directed have been puppet films and bankable directors are directors who have directed theatrical (cinema) pictures that have made millions of dollars. I haven't

directed any theatricals, so I can't be bankable.

You were saying there are a lot of big-budget films around at the moment. There's a danger in big budgets, isn't there? With a big budget you do what's easiest whereas, with a small budget, you have to be more creative.

Well, this is Gerry Anderson feeling sorry for himself. I think, in an ideal world, people who have for years worked on a small budget and therefore got the very best out of each pound or dollar... when science fiction took off, those were the people who should have been given the chance to take the big budgets and produce something really sensational. But business doesn't work that way. Americans are so much more adventurous than British people at the moment. They get the money and they arrive at London Airport with their sack containing \$20 million and they're certainly not going to come into a British studio and say, "Can you recommend a British producer to whom I can give this \$20 million to so that he can make himself a fortune. That is not going to happen. So, consequently, people like myself have not benefited from this tremendous boom in science fiction. It is, in the main, American money. The profits, as in the case of *Star Wars*, which was shot in Britain, will go back to America to encourage further investment for new American producers. British technicians have gained, but that's short-sighted. The profits are going back to America. They are not remaining here and they will not fund future British productions.

Why do you think it's so difficult to get backing in Britain?

Why do I think that is? Why, as we sit here, are we likely to have a State of Emergency in the next 48 hours? Because, sadly, this lovely country of ours which, at one time, had so many wonderful qualities, is falling apart. People don't think any more; people are lazy here; people don't want to work; people don't want to take chances; people are out of touch with new ideas. It's a national disease.

Though we don't necessarily agree with Mr Anderson's final comments—and look forward to your opinions—we sincerely hope someone will have the good sense to back this great pioneer of tv science fiction in Britain in the not-too-distant future.



UFO was Gerry Anderson's first attempt at a live action tv series. In this episode "Identified" a team of Shado doctors discover that the aliens breathe a blue liquid rather than oxygen.

Anderson Index

- 1956 *The Adventures of Twizzle* (52 x 15 minutes for Associated-Redifusion).
- 1957 *Torchy, The Battery Boy* (26 x 15 minutes for Associated-Redifusion).
- 1958 *Four Feather Falls* (52 x 30 minutes for Granada-tv).
- 1959 *Supercar* (39 x 30 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1961 *Fireball XL-5* (39 x 30 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1962-3 *Stingray* (39 x 30 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1964-6 *Thunderbirds* (32 x 60 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1966 *Thunderbirds Are Go* (Feature film for United Artists).
- 1967 *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* (32 x 30 minutes for ATV/

ITC).

- 1968 *Thunderbird Six* (Feature film for United Artists).
- 1968 *Joe 90* (30 x 30 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1969 *Doppelganger* (Feature film for Universal).
- 1969 *The Secret Service* (13 x 30, for ATV/ITC).
- 1969 *UFO* (26 x 60 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1971 *The Protectors* (52 x 30 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1975-6 *Space: 1999* (48 x 60 minutes for ATV/ITC).
- 1976 *The Day After Tomorrow* (1 x 60 minutes for NBC-tv).
- 1976 *The Investigator* (1 x 30 minutes. Unscreened pilot for puppet series).



Report by Tony Crawley

Okay, it's time certain questions were being asked. And answered.

1: Is *Superman 2* really only going to be *Superman 1 1/2*... or, at best, *1 3/4*?

2: Are the Salkinds thinking that \$50,000,000 is enough to spend on two movies and well, let's shove out what we've got of No 2, as it is, unfinished, ready or not and who gives a damn anyway?

It's beginning to look that way. This appears to be the wholly mercenary thinking behind director Richard Donner screaming for a start-date on shooting the rest of No 2. He says he needed the go-ahead by March - else there wouldn't be a *Superman 2*, at all. Or not as good as it should be.

Dick Donner is worried, not to say annoyed - and if rumour is correct, allegedly unpaid. He feels any delay in an official go-ahead to finish the sequel, with him firmly in the driver's seat, will lose him several key special effects men from his team. He has, tragically, lost two already; fatally - cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth and mattes-composites expert Les Bowie. He's trying hard to keep hold of Peter MacDonald, who was Unsworth's camera-operator for fifteen years, but fears the rest will be snapped up by the brace of other top sf films afoot in London - George Lucas' *The Empire Strikes Back* and Dino de Laurentiis' *Flash Gordon*.

Dino, in particular, is known to be after cameramen MacDonald and Denys Coop, special effects technicians Roy Field and Derek Meddings and editor Stuart Baird. And now that he's quit directing *Saturn 3*, *Superman* production designer John Barry is freely available again. Donner says he needs them all. But nobody - no Salkind, that is, seems to be listening.

Add to that, the news that Margot Kidder

has just signed for her second movie since *Superman*, that Christopher Reeve is about to start a new film, that Pinewood, like most British studios is getting all its stages booked up for a year, and that Marlon Brando is suing everyone in sight - and you begin to understand that the fate of *Superman 2* is less than certain.

In various statements from America, where he is staying until he has a deal finalised for the sequel, Dick Donner says he wants a start date, and that he also wants

Alexander and Ilya Salkind to negotiate with him - if they want him on the film.

"That means no games," demands Donner. "They have to want me to do it. It has to be on my terms and I don't mean financially. I mean control."

The question is, of course, where *are* the Salkinds?

Alexander's official address would appear to be c/o The Costa Rican Embassy, in Berne, Switzerland. He doesn't live there, of course. He is, we understand, currently





residing in Mexico. Ilya Salkind is, or was, still based at Pinewood studios last time I tried to contact him. But he wasn't in and could I call back in two weeks - "one week?" - and he'd be pleased to talk with me.

According to Donner, about three-quarters of *Superman 2* is in the can. This was shot during the schedule of the first film. The two films were, in fact, being made as one, rather like the Salkinds' two *Three Musketeers* movies. But as time for the *Superman* premiere drew nearer and nearer, shooting on *2* was halted, in order to complete *1* on time.

It now seems more than likely, that this 75% of *Superman 2* will become the 100% total of *Superman 2*.

Quite naturally, Dick Donner wants to get on and finish the job. Witnessing the world's response to the first film, he's found a whole new approach to the sequel's conclusion. "As far as I'm concerned," he has stated, "this is the easiest continuation in the world, the most incredible opportunity of a lifetime to incorporate the public's input into a second film."

He figures on about eight weeks shooting being required, plus months of special-effects post-production "more difficult

because we'll be challenging ourselves." The sequel footage requires locations, apparently, in New York, Canada, and Niagara Falls, where, like it or not Supie fans, Clark Kent and Lois Lane have "a sort of honeymoon" and she finds out who ole mild manners really is.

Having got rid of all the *Superman* origin stuff in the first film, Donner breaks the next one "can spend two hours breaking new ground". The plot has the three banished villains - Terence Stamp, Sarah Douglas and Jack O'Halloran - being inadvertently freed by *Superman*. They come to earth via the moon and Donner hopes Gene Hackman would agree to enlarge his Lex Luthor role into becoming the trio's agent for various and obviously nefarious foul deeds in our world.

The sequel, adds Donner, is a charming story. "I'd love to see this thing go on and on... I can't think of a more appropriate story to spin future films off of." *Superman Meets Luke Skywalker*, perhaps?

"But I won't be part of it past the second film," declares Donner. "I've worked seven days a week on this film for two years. I feel I've fulfilled my part." Now he's just likely to get on and finish it. Properly!

If he doesn't get the chance, the blame

will lie with the Salkinds. Not Warner Brothers. The Hollywood combine is merely releasing the film for the Salkind's distribution company, Film Export. And it is the Salkinds who hire, fire and pay the cast and crew. Admittedly, Warner Brothers has helped them pay their bills - by investing up to \$37,000,000 into *Superman*. More than enough, as far as the Hollywood company is concerned. They'll need to see the film earn \$80,000,000 before they're into any profit at all.

The word from Film City is that *Superman* will pull in around \$75,000,000 in the United States and Canada, where it's begun to catch *The Exorcist* as Warner's top grossing film, and already putting *The Goodbye Girl* and *A Star Is Born* into the shade. Any actual profit, though, will have to come from the rest of the world. And it's already doing well in Britain, West Germany and France, although one French critic referred to the superhero as "a giant sculpted in lard."

Richard Donner says the cost of the two films (or one and a half) must be around \$50,000,000 - with up to \$30,000,000 spent on *Superman 1*. "There's no way it could have cost more unless someone's got a suitcase hidden somewhere."

...THINGS..TO..COME.....

All-Star Wars

London is a battleground. The fate of three vest-budget fantasy films hang in the balance as producers fight to sign up Britain's top special-effects man and directors. As reported elsewhere this issue, *Superman*'s director Richard Donner feels he's going to lose all his key personnel if a date isn't announced for the continuation shooting of *Superman 2*. Gary Kurtz is signing up star backroom boys at Elstree for *The Empire Strikes Back* and Dino de Laurentiis has been poaching other top names for *Flash Gordon*.

Then there are the directors . . . Michael Hodges has finally signed on, succeeding Nicolas Roeg on *Flash Gordon*, which starts shooting in May at Shepperton - while building of the Planet Mongo goes on at five stages at Elstree studios. Nic Roeg, meantime, is getting on with his own project, *Illusions*, a love story leading to murder and starring singer Art Garfunkel and Therese Russell from *The Last Tycoon*.

And poor John Barry, the Oscar-winning production designer of *Star Wars* (he did the same job on *Superman*) has quit his directorial debut, *Saturn 3*, after a couple of weeks at

Shepperton. "Creative differences" is the euphemistic reason. One wonders how anyone, even Lew Grade, could have creative differences with John Barry. He wrote the story, after all! But that's movies for you - med!

Dune Deal Done

And to follow *Flash Gordon*, what better, says Dino de Laurentiis, than Frank Herbert's *Dune*. Yes, indeed, a *Dune* deal is done. Herbert is into his first draft of the script and shooting is slated for next summer . . . in one desert or another. If successful, and if Herbert approves of the finished product, it's on the cards that Dino will continue the trilogy and shoot 1970's *Messiah* and 1975's *Children of Dune*, as well.

Dune, itself was first published in 1965, and has since sold copies galore in eleven languages. So why the delay on bringing it to the screen? The answer is writer Frank Herbert himself. As an ex-newsperman - he was on the *San Francisco Examiner* for ten years - he was more than a little wary of Hollywood and how Film City would handle his creation. He preferred his awards for the book - The Hugo from the World Science Fiction Convention and The Nebula from the Science Fiction Writers of America - to anything the film industry could offer him. Until Dino's deal which has him at least drafting the shooting script.

For the few uninitiated out there, *Dune* is set on Arrakis, a desert planet. The book's hero, Paul Atreides, sets out to conquer the Arrakis warriors, the Fremen. They mine the desert wastes for a highly addictive spice, and ride giant sandworms . . .

Shrinking, indeed

Hollywood's *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* has shrunk so far as to completely disappear from Universal's production plans. In short: the film is off. "Budgetary problems," it says here, which means about as much as John Barry's "creative differences" on *Saturn 3*. The trouble is obviously not the chosen director, John Landis, this year's Spielberg at Universal following the gigantic success of *National Lampoon's Animal House* (which has taken more money than *Jaws 2* in America).

No, the problem is probably more connected with the star, Lily Tomlin, and the script by her collaborator, Jena Wagner. In fact: movie politics. Jena, you see, directed Lily in a Universal film called *Moment By Moment*, and despite the fact that Lily's co-star therein happened to be Mr Box-Office himself, John Travolta, the film was crucified by the critics and is only just holding its own at the cinemas.

What might happen is Universal will keep the femela angle on this planned re-make of 1957's *The Incredible Shrinking Man* - and give it to another star. Or revert to their original ideas of a Ron Clark script designed with Jack



It would be unfair to assume that the poster art for *Superhuman* is a mere cash-in on *Superman*. Would it? The film is an Italian production from Euraka Films International.

Fantasy Film Chart

The computers are cooling. The accounting is done after another year of box-office records for films and filmmakers alike. In America, for example, box-office takes broke through the two-billion-dollar mark again—doubling the figures for as recent as 1971. George Lucas has much to be thanked for indeed.

But how did the films fare? Did CE3K catch *Star Wars* at the post? Of course not! How did *De Palma's Fury* compare with *Carrie*? Silly question. (Silly film!) Did *The Swarm* sting anyone apart from Clive James? Where's James Bond figure in the ratings—and *Fantasia*, too? And which was the most successful *Planet of the Apes* movie?

Now you may well disagree with some of the movies included. You shouldn't. Even if some (like the Disney cartoon classics; and not tell us they're not

the stuff of fantasy), they all make intriguing reading, and comparisons. Odd, for instance, to find *Psycho* just, but only just beating off *The Absent-Minded Professor*, 20,800 Leagues ... *The Shaggy DA* and *Son of Flubber*. (Logan's *Run* didn't).

Once again our information is drawn from the venerable show-business bible, *Variety*; via its annual listings of the screen's all-time box-office champs. These are movies which have earned beyond \$4,000,000 in distributors' rentals in America and Canada alone. The money charted, therefore, is in dollars (movie money, anyway), and for a rough notion of the overall world figures, just double them.

Or just double with our chart, turn off the telly, and sweat up a bit. Could help you win some bets. Check the chart and discover if Willard did better than

Berberella ... that Ben doesn't make it at all (sorry about that Ben; Benjie does, but we included him out) ... how Monty P.'s Holy Grail compares with *Grizzly* ... which did better out of the old and new King Kong. And yes, indeed, how do these sequels we're all supposedly so sick and tired of really work out—who's the winner of the *Exorcist/Jaws/Omen II* battle?

There's more nuggets of information hidden here, as well. On a purely chauvinistic note, it's highly gratifying to see that while we have no movie industry to speak (or even whisper) of anymore, we still have the directors. Among the 80-odd movie-makers' work in the chart, five Britons are in the Top Twenty section, John Guillermin makes the Top Ten pair twice. As for the Hollywoodians, Brian De Palma, Don Taylor and Richard Fleischer could only match the triple apexes of our own J. Lee Thompson. Michael Anderson and (thanks to 007) Terence Young and

Guy Hamilton.

There's a Briton at the top of the director's list, too. No prizes for guessing who. Yes, it has to be Hitchcock. He's in with ten movies, though it has to be admitted that their money adds up to less, much less than half of the amazing *Star Wars* record ... Second to Hitch by the way, is another British-born director: Disney's pride and joy, Robert Stevenson, with seven movies, all making more than \$9,000,000, which is better than Hitch's track-record over the years.

But enough from us. We're presenting the facts (thank you, *Variety*). You can get your own slide-rules and calculators out and make what you will of our first annual fantastical films chart. You could even tell us which movies should not have been included. But be nice about it: the chart took a lot of compiling!

(Figures in brackets denote positions in last year's *Hot* Top Fifty.)

1. (1)	<i>Star Wars</i> (Director: George Lucas; 1977)	\$164,785,000	46.	<i>The Absent-Minded Professor</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1981)	11,100,000
2. (3)	<i>Jaws</i> (Steven Spielberg; 1975)	121,254,000	47. (24)	<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> (Richard Fleischer; 1954)	11,000,000
3. (2)	<i>The Exorcist</i> (William Friedkin; 1973)	82,200,000	48.	<i>The Fury</i> (Brian De Palma; 1978)	10,800,000
4. (14)	<i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i> (Steven Spielberg; 1977)	77,000,000	49.	<i>The Shaggy D.A.</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1978)	10,550,000
5. (4)	<i>Towering Inferno</i> (John Guillermin; 1975)	50,000,000	50.	<i>Son of Flubber</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1963)	10,450,000
6.	<i>Jaws II</i> (Jeannot Szwarc; 1978)	49,299,000	51. (25)	<i>Island at the Top of the World</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1974)	10,200,000
7. (5)	<i>Airport</i> (George Stevens; 1970)	45,300,000	52. (34)	<i>Rollercoaster</i> (James Goldstone; 1977)	9,974,000
8.	<i>Heaven Can Wait</i> (Warren Beatty, Buck Henry; 1978)	42,517,000	53.	<i>From Russia With Love</i> (Terence Young; 1964)	9,820,000
9. (8)	<i>The Poseidon Adventure</i> (Ronald Neame; 1972)	42,000,000	54.	<i>Blackbeard's Ghost</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1968)	9,675,000
10. (8)	<i>King Kong</i> (John Guillermin; 1976)	38,915,000	55.	<i>The Late Great Planet Earth</i> (R. Amram; 1977)	9,656,000
11. (7)	<i>Earthquake</i> (Mark Robson; 1974)	38,250,000	56. (32)	<i>Escape To Witch Mountain</i> (John Hough; 1975)	9,500,000
12. (9)	<i>Young Frankenstein</i> (Mel Brooks; 1975)	34,800,000	(26)	<i>Logan's Run</i> (Michael Anderson; 1976)	
13.	<i>Dh. Gd</i> (Carl Reiner; 1977)	31,000,000	58. (28)	<i>Drce</i> (Michael Anderson; 1977)	9,430,000
14.	<i>Thunderball</i> (Terence Young; 1965)	28,530,000	59. (27)	<i>Willard</i> (Delbert Mann; 1971)	9,300,000
15. (11)	<i>The Omen</i> (Richard Donner; 1978)	27,851,000	60. (30)	<i>Two Minute Warning</i> (Larry Pearce; 1976)	9,110,000
16.	<i>Snow White</i> (animation; 1937)	26,750,000	61.	<i>Da Her Majesty's Secret Service</i> (Peter Hunt; 1969)	9,100,000
17. (12)	<i>Airport 1975</i> (Jack Smight; 1975)	25,805,000	62. (29)	<i>Rollerball</i> (Norman Jewison; 1975)	9,000,000
18. (13)	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> (Stanley Kubrick; 1968)	24,100,000	63. (31)	<i>Beneath the Planet of the Apes</i> (Ted Post; 1970)	8,800,000
19.	<i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> (Michael Anderson; 1956)	23,120,000		<i>Eyes of Laura Mars</i> (Irvin Kershner; 1978)	
20.	<i>Golddigger</i> (Guy Hamilton; 1964)	22,860,000	65. (33)	<i>The Andromeda Strain</i> (Robert Wise; 1971)	8,341,000
21.	<i>The Spy Who Loved Me</i> (Lewis Gilbert; 1977)	22,000,000	68.	<i>The Cat From Outer Space</i> (Norman Tokar; 1978)	8,250,000
22.	<i>The Love Bug</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1964)	21,000,000	67. (35)	<i>The Boston Strangler</i> (Richard Fleischer; 1968)	8,000,000
23.	<i>Diamonds Are Forever</i> (Guy Hamilton; 1971)	19,620,000	(38)	<i>Sleeper</i> (Woody Allen; 1973)	
24.	<i>You Only Live Twice</i> (Lewis Gilbert; 1967)	19,400,000	69. (37)	<i>Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger</i> (Sam Wanamaker; 1977)	7,700,000
25.	<i>Bambi</i> (animation; 1942)	18,735,000	70.	<i>The Boys From Brazil</i> (Franklin J. Schaffner; 1978)	7,700,000
26.	<i>Herbie Rides Again</i> (Robert Stevenson; 1974)	17,500,000	71.	<i>The Swarm</i> (Irwin Allen; 1978)	7,800,000
27.	<i>Peter Pan</i> (animation; 1953)	16,875,000	72.	<i>Family Plot</i> (Alfred Hitchcock; 1978)	7,300,000
28.	<i>Love And Let Die</i> (Guy Hamilton; 1973)	15,850,000	73. (39)	<i>Grizzly</i> (William C. Girdler; 1975)	7,272,000
29. (21)	<i>Fantasia</i> (animation; 1940)	15,500,000	74.	<i>Return From Witch Mountain</i> (John Hough; 1978)	7,250,000
30. (15)	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i> (Stanley Kubrick; 1971)	15,400,000	75. (40)	<i>Beyond The Door</i> (Oliver Hellman; 1975)	7,088,000
31. (16)	<i>The Hindenburg</i> (Robert Wise; 1975)	15,105,000	78. (38)	<i>The Reincarnation of Peter Proud</i> (J. Lee Thompson; 1975)	7,000,000
32. (19)	<i>Airport '77</i> (Jerry Jameson; 1977)	15,074,000	(41)	<i>Westworld</i> (Michael Crichton; 1973)	
33. (20)	<i>Carrie</i> (Brian De Palma; 1978)	15,000,000	79. (42)	<i>Survive</i> (Rene Cardone; 1978)	8,975,000
(17)	<i>Planet of the Apes</i> (Franklin J. Schaffner; 1968)		79. (45)	<i>It's Alive</i> (Larry Cohen; 1977)	8,800,000
(17)	<i>Rosamary's Baby</i> (Roman Polanski; 1968)				
38.	<i>Come</i> (Michael Crichton; 1978)	14,400,000	80. (43)	<i>Frenzy</i> (Alfred Hitchcock; 1972)	8,500,000
39.	<i>Black Sunday</i> (John Frankenheimer; 1977)	14,202,000	(43)	<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i> (Don Taylor; 1977)	
39.	<i>Herbie Goes To Monte Carlo</i> (Vincent McVeety; 1977)	14,000,000		<i>Ten Curtain</i> (Alfred Hitchcock; 1988)	
39. (22)	<i>Exorcist II—The Heretic</i> (John Boorman; 1977)	13,900,000	83.	<i>North By Northwest</i> (Alfred Hitchcock; 1989)	8,450,000
40.	<i>Pinnocchio</i> (animation; 1940)	13,800,000	84.	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i> (animation; 1951)	8,375,000
41.	<i>Cinderella</i> (W. Jackson; 1949)	12,450,000	85.	<i>Blow Up</i> (Michaelangelo Antonioni; 1967)	8,350,000
42.	<i>The Shaggy Dog</i> (C. Burton; 1959)	12,250,000		<i>Dr No</i> (Terence Young; 1962)	
43.	<i>Omen II—Damien</i> (Don Taylor; 1978)	12,050,000	87. (48)	<i>The High and the Mighty</i> (William Wellman; 1954)	8,100,000
44.	<i>Capricorn One</i> (Peter Hyams; 1978)	11,500,000	88. (47)	<i>Feed of the Gods</i> (Bert I. Gordon; 1978)	8,000,000
45. (23)	<i>Psycho</i> (Alfred Hitchcock; 1960)	11,200,000	(47)	<i>In Cold Blood</i> (Richard Brooks; 1988)	

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Nicholson or Chevy Chase in mind for the old Grant Williams role. At that time, Universal were even talking of have three-dimensional effects in the film. John Landis, due here soon to direct *An American Werewolf In London* for Don Boyd's company, was promising spectacular effects for his version. A few explosions maybe, but he never expected it to blow up in his face.

SF Girls

Heather Menzies seems stuck, in the fantasy fold. After the *Logan's Run* tv series and Roger Corman's *Piranha* movie, she appeared as one of the hero's two medical assistants in *Capt America*. Belinda J. Montgomery had worse luck - she turned up in *Murder In Music City*, a would-be cop-show pilot starring, of all people, Sonny Bono, formerly of Sonny and Cher. Now she's returned to Canada where she made *Blackout*, to star in *Stona Cold Dead* - an apt description after all those wet episodes of *The Man From Atlantis*.

Invasions' Invasion

The re-maker of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is having to ignore the re-release of the 1956 original in America. Producer Robert H. Solo knew from the outset that his re-meke rights would be fraught with "shadows" but not even Solo could foresee the complicated web of ownership surrounding Don Siegel's mini-classic over the last 23 years.

Solo's re-meke deal was with the original distributors, Allied-Artists, and the last owners of the distribution rights, National Telefilm Associates. To satisfy Solo and his distributors, United Artists, AA and NTA agreed to halt tv airings for 18 months, and to yank the original from the cinema circuit. By last August, however, *Invasion* had already been taken over in a bunch of other NTA movies by TAB Films, formed by an ex-NTA man. NTA's contract with TAB gave NTA the unconditional right to withdraw any picture from the group at any time, upon the usual notice. Too late... I TAB had already leased *Invasion* to Crystal Pictures - end minus any similar withdrawal clause.

Which is how and why UA, AA, NTA and TAB can't stop CP - still with me? - from flogging the original to cinemas. "Although we have all the legal grounds we need to do something about it, if we wanted to," says Solo, "I'm not sure it's worth the efforts for the few bucks, here and there, we might be losing."

Due to all these remifications, the old movie turned up on tv in Los Angeles while the new version was playing in town. But that hurt CP more than UA. The new film had been in town four weeks already and Crystal Pictures lost a week's run in a Los Angeles cinema because of the tv showing. Solo is none too worried by the two *Invasions*. He's sure Crystal have very few prints of the original and can't com-

pete with his mess release. In fact, he goes so far as to suggest the oldie may generate even more interest in the newie - "since so many critics said we actually improved on it." That's utter nonsense... still I wish Solo better luck with his nextre-make - *Village of the Damned*.

Try, try again

You may recall we made mention of the awful mess Senrio Communications had on their hands when opening their animated film extravaganza, *Matamorphoses*. They pulled the movie out of distribution to take it apart and put it back together again... Well, *Mata-*

morphoses has now metamorphosed into *Winds of Change*. First time out, the film was a flop mainly because of one little detail. Nobody could understand what the hell it was all about. Sanrio have solved that as well - Peter Ustinov now narrates the film.

Comic Strip-off

Are you ready for *Capt America*...? Ready or not, Universal-tv have added him to their duty-roster of comic-book heroes. Unfortunately, it looked very much that way - as if they aired it, ready or not. Rep Brown, last seen as a dumb klutz of a boxer on *Happy Days*,

Who Knows What Evil Lurks...



A LUCASFILM, LTD. PRODUCTION
"RADIOLAND MURDERS"
Screenplay by WILLARD HUYNCK and GLORIA KATZ
from a story by GEORGE LUCAS
Directed by GEORGE LUCAS Produced by GARY KURTZ

First announced in 1974, George Lucas' *Radioland Murders* sports a highly derivative ad line—"Who knows what evil lurks..." No prizes for completing the quote!

...COME.....THIS

turned up, if not on, as the ex-marine turning defender of the American ideal. Whether he'll still be around for a series looks extremely unlikely. To be fair, so does the idea of a full series out of this tawdry pilot. There was too much footage of our super-hero whizzing across desert terrain on his super-cycle that it took more like *Evel Knives Meets Easy Rider*... and indeed, I preferred Pater Fonda's Capt America in that film!

Len Birman played the Federal investigator-cum-medico-cum-superhero, and Steve Forrest was the first(and last?) villain.

Schneer away!

A change is as good as a... vastly improved budget! Producer Charles H. Schneer and his longtime associate in the realms of fantasy, the brilliant Ray Harryhausen, are making their twelfth movie, *Clash of the Titans*, for MGM. The news has, not surprisingly, put Columbia Pictures into a state of shock. Columbia, of course, have released all the Charlie and Ray movies - including *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* in 1958 and *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* in 1977... never forgetting for one moment, their matchless movie, *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963).

On the other hand, the news is very good, particularly after all last year's rumours about the two men falling out. Harryhausen quitting the team and Jim Danforth being short-listed to take his place. At times, their new title sounded all too literal. Obviously, such stories can now be forgotten.

The new project is a hybrid of Greek mythology, set around the classic theme of Perseus and Andromeda. Like *Eye of the Tiger*, it's written by Beverly Cross, the playwright husband of actress Maggie Smith. MGM must positively adore it. *Titans* will be Metro's most expensive movie since David Leans' *Ryan's Daughter* ten years ago. *Titans* is costing

three times the team's usual \$3,500,000 ceiling at Columbia.

No casting has been announced as we go to press, although we've heard they're looking for a Richard Chamberlain-type for the lead. An actor who can handle Shakespeare is required, according to MGM officials. We must admit it would make a welcome change if one of Charlie Schneers' heroes could cope with his lines in reasonable English, as well as fighting off Ray's incredible animal kingdom. A new Kerwin Matthews, say, rather than another Patrick Wayne, or lord protect us, Todd Armstrong (he had to be dubbed as Jason). Whoever gets the lead role, he has a good director - Desmond Davis, the one-time cameraman, best known for smaller, essentially more humanistic movies like *The Girl With Green Eyes* and *I Was Happy Here*. A curious choice in many respects, but it could work wonders for the often tired-looking Schneer-Harryhausen formulae.

We have to wait another couple of years or so before we get to see these *Titans* clashing mightily all over Malta, Spain and Italy. This is due to Ray Harryhausen's meticulous model-animation work. Naturally all such post-production work will be carried out in London. "All the movie magic gets done in England," comments MGM's production chief Richard Shepherd. True, very true.

Naturally, the new film will be utilising Ray's Dynamation process as per usual (though to be frank, one really wonders why, after the more recent, technological breakthroughs). Plenty of toil ahead, therefore, for Ray and production designer Frank White. Frank's responsible for building the home of Zeus and the Gods on Mount Olympus; the wells of the moon; the temple of Thebes, the sea goddess; the shrine of the Stygian Witches; the Isle of the Dead; and the home of Medusa, the Gorgon. And, thanks to MGM's Leo the Lion, not a mortgage required for any of them...

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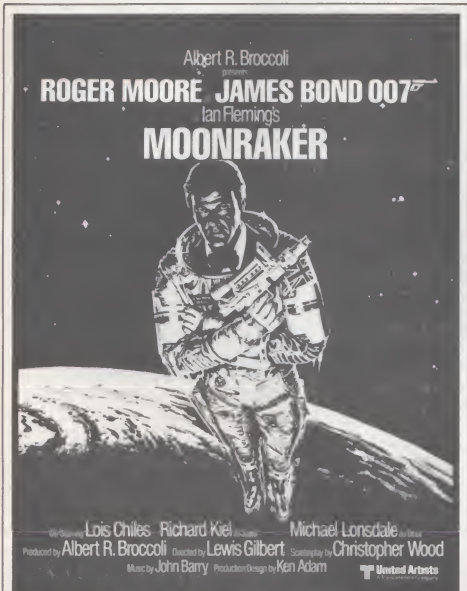
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Ray Harryhausen (left) and Charles Schneer

...THINGS..TO..COME....



The new one from Albert R. Broccoli. Due for release in mid 1980 Moonraker stars Roger Moore (as usual) and busy Richard Kiel.

Spielbergers

Steven Spielberg continues backing the young film-writers and makers, Bob Zemeckis and Bob Gale. So all right, I Wanna Hold Your Hand bombed out, but they've written Steven's new comedy, 1941, which his director pal, big, bearded John Milius, is producing. So, Steve and John are co-producing the youngster's new project, Used Cars. I feel sure it's more expensive than just a two-Bob movie.

Film Toy

Latest miracle created by Samuelson Film Service in London and Paris is travelling across the Atlantic almost more often than that other new film star, the Concorde. It's the Louma

remote-control camera platform, designed to allow a full 360-degree pan and tilt. So far, there's only one Louma around, which is why it keeps going around from the 007 Moonraker set in Paris to Steven Spielberg's frantic 1941 comedy set-up in Los Angeles.

Halloween~er

American critics are finally going overboard for whiz-kid director John Carpenter. Overboard is, alas, the operative word. Having dismissed his best movies, Derk Star and Assault on Precinct 13, the scribes are lavishing overkill praise on his new, creepy number, Halloween. When I read comments like "a movie so scary that, yes, I would compare it to Psycho," from Chicago's Roger Ebert, and "a horror classic

that will have you screaming with regularity... the kind of picture that forces you, when you go home, to sleep with the lights on." I wonder if I saw the same (dull) movie. Even the usually astingent Village Voice in New York says "it can stand proud alongside Night of the Living Dead and Hitchcock's Psycho: a movie of almost unrelieved chills." Not for me. I found Halloween a very hallow winner indeed.

Snatching Slashing

The Stateside critics are more sharply divided over Philip Keufman's re-make of Invasion of the Body Snatchers, with Donald Sutherland as Kevin McCarthy (who has a guest walk-on, on indeed run-on, on himself), Brooke Adams as Dana Winter... and Leonard Nimoy being better than any of them. The original's director, Don Siegel, seems to approve of the new version—he plays a cab-driver in it. As for the scribes in the stalls, Variety's man said it "not only matches the original in horrific tone and effect, but exceeds it in both conception and execution." The man from Time (Richard Schickel) disagreed. The 1956 film, he says, was a cheap, neat, slightly loony science-fiction horror story; the new one "lingers too long and too soberly over material that, as the original showed, must be quickly, even superficially handled, if it is to be accepted at all." Our comments appear elsewhere in this issue.

Re-makes, cont'd.

The Bodysnatchers producer, Robert H. Solo, stays in the same groove by preparing a new version of MGM's cultish British pick-up of 1960, Village of the Damned. Joyce and John Carrington are tackling the script. Obviously, none of this trio take any notice of Time's Richard Schickel who feels, quite rightly, that re-making a happily remembered old movie is a pointless and impossible exercise. Why so? "There is an irresistible urge to improve it, expand it, stamp it with the personalities of the re-makers." The kiss of death, in fact.

Somebody who does agree with Schickel is the head honcho of New York's Crystal Pictures. Having already re-issued the original Flesh Gordon flicks before Dino De Laurentiis buries him for good, the Crystal-gazers are now re-releasing Don Siegel's Body Snatchers... and I wouldn't be surprised to find them digging up the first Village of the Damned, either.

Time Trap

New York director Sidney Lumet (he's never worked in Hollywood on any of his 26 films) is waiting for Broadway's hit, Death Trap, to close. He can't begin the movie until then—around 1982, he reckons. Playwright Ira Levin (who also gave us Rosemary's Baby) will

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script the flick himself. Wise move after the quite horrendous way his *Boys From Brazil* was handled by Lord Low Grade.

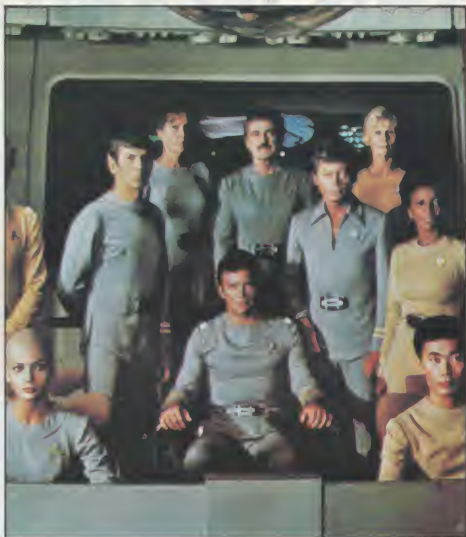
Trekking

Further to the feature in *Starburst 4*, here is the news from the log of the starship, *Enterprise*. Current budget on *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* is up to \$20-million, about one quarter of that on special-effects. William Shatner's Capt Kirk is now an Admiral, summoned with his old crew out of mothballs—like the *Enterprise* itself—to investigate a huge alien force heading towards earth at "warp seven speed", decimating all other spaceships in its path.

Leonard Nimoy's Mr Spock is called from his native Vulcan, and joining McCoy, Scott, Sulu, Uhura, Chekov, and the rest, are two new crew members—including the *Enterprise's* new skipper, Capt Willard Decker, played by Stephen Collins, none too happy at losing his top spot to the Admiral. The other new trekker is a bald woman navigator from the planet Delra—played by a stunning lady named Persis Khambatta. The *Enterprise* is changed only slightly—an extra door, we hear. But the crew have resplendent new uniforms—of course, otherwise where would the pyjama merchandising come from... the old tv jump-suits?

Director Robert Wise is well versed in film-fantasy, having edited *Citizen Kane* and directed *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951) *The Haunting* (1963), *The Sound of Music* (1965) and *The Andromeda Strain* (1970). He calls the *Star Trek* movie a mystery story. More mysteries will be unveiled in further log reports...

Compiled by Tony Crawley



As reported in *Starburst 6* Disney has entered the sf lists. For real. No jokey, adolescent rubbish. The biggest Disney budget of all time—\$17 million—is behind *The Black Hole*. The project also includes a staggering total of 150 matte shots, which must be a record for any film in the world. Certainly for Disney—more than twice the optical work required for *Mary Poppins* or *Island At The Top of the World*. Harrison Ellenshaw is in charge of Disney's matte division. He has three artists at work on the mattes, plus two camera crews on daily double shifts. Gary Nelson, who made Paramount tv's *Washington: Behind Closed Doors*, is directing the movie with a far from usual Disneyesque cast of Maximilian Schell, Ernest Borgnine, Anthony Perkins, Yvette Mimieux and others. Should be good.

Starburst SF classics

THIS ISLAND EARTH

Continuing our series we take a look back to 1955 and one of the most under-rated of the mid fifties sf American movies *This Island Earth*.

Feature by Tise Vahimagi



"The supreme excitement of our time!"—was the way Universal studios hailed their big-budget sf blockbuster of 1955—*This Island Earth*. Supreme excitement it was, for Universal had not embarked on such an ambitious project before in their contributions to the 1950s science fiction explosion. It was also their first time, with sf, in Technicolor.

Although Universal had made the Horror movie their home base when they started producing the now-classic chillers of the '30s—*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Mummy*, *The Old Dark House*, etc.—the studio went through something of a lean time during the 1940s. Most probably because World War Two and its depressing afterimages were horrific enough. The movie-going public at the time didn't much care to see grotesque characters in scary stories.

However, by the early '50s, a whole new wave of hysteria hit the headlines—the UFO reports and the "Red" scare, Communism. The unidentified flying objects phase, along with post-war rocket research, inspired the American people to look to the stars, for in the far reaches of outer space lay the possibility of a new menace. With the home-grown political propaganda warning against Communist infiltration, movie makers utilised the Cold War fear alongside the outer space anxiety—and H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" began to take on a more realistic shape. Movies with the general theme of "they are out there" soon began flowing out of Hollywood studios: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Thing from Another World*, *The Man from Planet X*, *Red Planet Mars*, *War of the Worlds*, *Invaders from Mars*, *Killers from Space*, and many more.

Universal studios had entered the sf field with *It Came from Outer Space* in 1953, a minor but effective sf thriller about aliens adopting the identities of humans. Set in a small American desert community, the film was directed by Jack Arnold and produced, in 3-D, by William Alland. The team of director Arnold and producer Alland went on to create some of Universal's most famous '50s fantasy films, such as *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Tarantula*, *Revenge of the Creature*, and *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. In the middle of this great movie output came the exceptional *This Island Earth*, produced by William Alland and directed by journeyman Joseph Newman.

Very few films during the 1950s offered the sf fan much by way of distant alien worlds or future civilisations—mainly due to budgetary limitations. If a barren, sandy landscape could suffice, and one of the players could say "So this is Mars!" the audience would usually agree and save the company thousands of dollars. What few films there were, such as *Rocketship XM* (1950), *Flight to Mars* (1951) and *Conquest of Space* (1955), offered very little in the way of imagination and design; although the special visual effects in the

latter film are sometimes impressive.

There were some notable exceptions, however, in the form of *Forbidden Planet* (1956) and the earlier *This Island Earth* (1955). MGM's lavish and colourful *Forbidden Planet* did supreme justice to the sf genre, and will be covered—in depth—in a later issue.

This Island Earth began as a short story (a three-parter, in fact) in the pages of *Standard Magazines' Thrilling Wonder*

Universal staff-producer William Alland was assigned to the making of *This Island Earth* and the quality of the finished film is largely due to his creative skill. Alland, an ex-actor and radio-writer, worked on most of Universal's fantasy films during the '50s; outside of his more famous work with Jack Arnold, however, he has also plumbed the depths of *The Land Unknown*, *Deadly Mantis*, *The Mole People*, and *Colossus of New York*.



Opposite: Cal Meacham (Rex Reason) and Ruth Adams (Faith Domergue) are brought aboard the Metaluna saucer by Exeter (Jeff Morrow, standing right). Above: Ruth, Cal and Exeter are stopped by a Metaluna Mutant (Eddie Parker) as they try to make their escape from the doomed planet of Metaluna.

Stories in 1952. The author, Raymond F. Jones, later expanded the work into a novel which was published by Shasta Publishers in 1953. Raymond F. Jones (not to be confused with D. F. Jones who penned *Colossus*, a story that was later filmed by Universal as *The Forbin Project*) had also written the science fiction stories *Renaissance*, *Son of the Stars* and *The Toy Maker*—the latter written in 1946, somewhat prefiguring *This Island Earth*, was also about the conflict between two planetary civilisations. When *This Island Earth* first appeared in novel form, an independent film unit called Sabre Productions acquired the rights and assigned screenwriter Edward G. O'Callaghan to develop a screenplay. However, the project soon became too ambitious for the small outfit to produce, and so they sold the property to Universal-International.

The story, the final result of writers Franklin Coen and Edward G. O'Callaghan, tells of an alien scientist named Exeter (played by Jeff Morrow) who is sent to Earth with a small party to select and recruit some of the world's leading scientific brains. The purpose of this visit is to try to save their home planet, Metaluna, which is on the verge of total destruction due to a long-time war with neighbouring planet, Zahgon. One of the Earth scientists, Cal Meacham (Rex Reason), is selected after he has successfully constructed an "Interociter", an advanced communications device which was mysteriously delivered to Meacham as a large construction kit.

However, no sooner has he built the device, and received on it a strange message from Exeter offering him a position on a secret project, the alien activates a self-



destruct and the machine blows up.

Pretty soon, however, Meacham is collected by a remote-controlled plane and transported to Exeter's base in a remote region of America. There he meets two of the aliens, who are human in form but with extremely high foreheads, and fellow Earth scientist Dr Ruth Adams (*Faith Domergue*). The two, naturally, discover the aliens' secret—that they are not really *humans*!—and attempt to escape in a small plane, but they are picked up by the Metalunan flying saucer and whisked off into space. They are taken back to Metaluna where, as captives, they will continue their experiments to save the planet.

On arrival, they realise that Metaluna is doomed; Zahgon spacecraft are bringing about the end of the planet by bombarding it with meteors. Exeter's superior, Monitor (*Douglas Spencer*: he who spoke the famous "Keep watching the skies!" line at the end of *The Thing*), decides that Earth will have to be colonised by the Metalunans, and suggests that Exeter return to Earth to



prepare for the invasion. However, Exeter has come to like and understand the Earthlings and the trio make their escape just as the planet is beginning to break up. Back on the flying saucer, Ruth is attacked by a grotesque mutation—one of the legion deliberately bred to serve as slave labour—but the gruesome creature is eventually destroyed. Once back in the Earth's atmosphere, Exeter releases the humans in their plane and crashes his saucer into the ocean.

The March 29, 1955 issue of *The Hollywood Reporter* reviewed the film favourably: "Richly invested, imaginatively conceived,

and produced with class by William Alland, this top-drawer science-fiction picture should repeat the tremendous box-office success of Alland's earlier *It Came from Outer Space*. The whole thing is moved out of the hokey B-picture category by Franklin Coen's and Edward G. O'Callaghan's screenplay, which gives Raymond F. Jones' original novel the advantage of sound dramatization that starts low by leading with familiar things and gradually builds up to an action and a theme that transcend the frontiers of space and thought. Joseph Newman's direction capitalizes admirably on the opportunities the script gives him for an ever tightening suspense. He also gives his characters, even the two from outer space, sufficient human verity to keep the audience interest in what seems to be happening to them. Most important of all is the teamwork of art directors Alexander Golitzen and Richard H. Riedel, the special effects of David S. Horsley and Clifford Stine, the optical printing of Roswell A. Hoffman, and the color photography of Clifford Stine, all of whom combine their talents to give the spectacular views of vast constellations, flaming space ships and limitless panoramas of an expiring planet."

This *Island Earth* treats itself seriously, despite plot situations reminiscent of the ray-gun and rocket-ship days of the *Startling Stories* and *Captain Future* pulp magazines and *Flash Gordon* serials. The film's special effects are particularly exciting, but unfortunately, it is only in the final part of the film that the strong visual effects come in.

Probably the most spectacular of the special effects sequences in the film are the scenes of Metaluna, with the partially cloud-covered, battle-scarred surface of the planet being bombarded by meteors.

Top: Exeter (Jeff Morrow) demonstrates the power of the "Interociter" communications device. Left: Exeter welcomes Cal (Rex Reason) and Ruth (Faith Domergue) to the dying planet of Metaluna. Far right: Cal and Ruth end up in the lake after trying to escape from the Metalunans. Right: As Exeter, Cal and Ruth make their escape from Metaluna they fail to notice the Mutant has boarded the ship. In the ensuing fight the Mutant is injured.



During this onslaught, Exeter's saucer performs a strange docking procedure by extending a light beam for transportation down to the Metalunan city.

The Metalunan surface was built on a sound stage at Universal as a 110-foot miniature terrain. The Zahgon fighters and the Metalunan saucer were made of aluminium, weighing in the region of 18 pounds each. The models were guided and controlled by a complex assortment of overhead wires and tracks. The Mutant, played by Eddie Parker under the suit, was a last minute addition, suggested by the Universal front-office for promotional purposes; three make-up men, Jack Keven, Chris Mueller and Robert Hickman, created the monster at a whopping cost of \$24,000.

The also-favourable *Variety* review of the film included a comment on the film's



Above: Cal and Ruth meet for the first time. Below: Exeter (Jeff Morrow) and the Mutant (Eddie Parker) clown for a publicity still. Right: Bud Westmore's excellent makeup on Eddie Parker is seen to its best advantage.

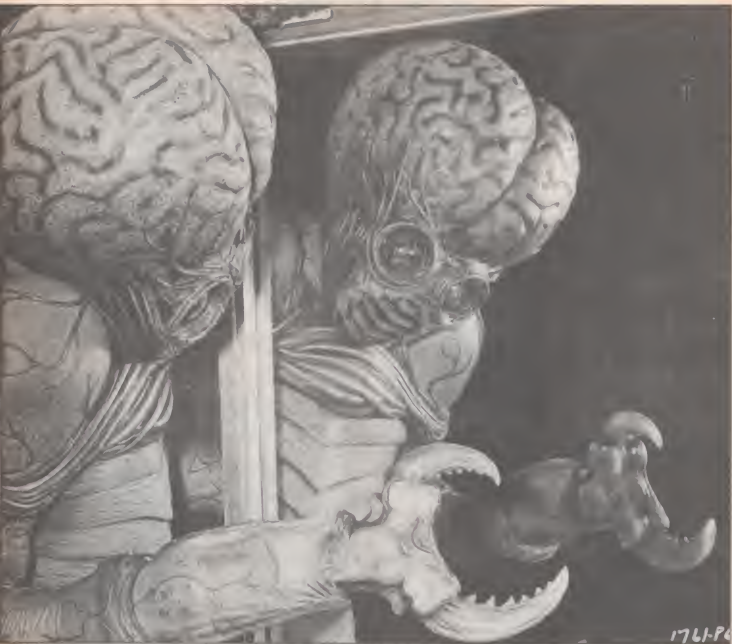


effects: "Special effects of the most realistic type rival the story and characterisations in capturing the interest in this exciting science-fiction chiller, one of the most imaginative, fantastic and cleverly-conceived entries to date."

However, when the completed film was screened by the studio executives they decided that some scenes needed to be re-shot—particularly the later scenes on the planet Metaluna. Producer William Alland regrouped his leading players, Reason, Domergue and Morrow, and brought in director Jack Arnold to handle the re-shooting; Arnold did not get screen credit for his part. *This Island Earth* was favourably received by the critics and the movie-going public, but it was not a great financial success in terms of box-office receipts. Universal then returned to making their routine black & white programmers, such as *Land Unknown* and *Deadly Mantis*. The colourful space opera of *This Island Earth* and *Forbidden Planet* was to lay dormant for many years before the advent of *Star Wars*.

This Island Earth remains as one of the few 1950s sf films that does not directly present a malevolent alien monster, or suggest an all-out alien invasion from the beginning. The alien vanguard force, as seen in *The Man from Planet X*, or the organised invasion of Earth, such as *War of the Worlds* and *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers*, was a popular theme during the decade, introducing all manner of bizarre creatures and rampaging war-machines. *This Island Earth* represents neither form of alien invasion, but merely a visitation by some aliens seeking help.

In an interview for *Photon* magazine, Jeff Morrow stated that the Exeter character was originally written as a "heavy" but, following discussions with William Alland



and one of the writers, he was changed and eventually became something of a hero. Early publicity photographs of Exeter tried to make him appear menacing and, when filming had begun, some of the early scenes of him reveal a somewhat brooding character. Exeter's early make-up went through a few changes also, as Jeff Morrow explains:

"Though nobody really knows why, the producer wanted the hair on the Metaluna people to be pure white; but for lighting purposes, the make-up man thought it should be a little darker. The producer disagreed. Well, when the dailies came back on my first scenes, the hair was ghost-white. So they tried printing the scenes darker, which only made my face look like it was chocolate-brown. That's why I look different in those first scenes of me on the intercom. Gradually they darkened my hair with some grey, not for cosmetic

reasons, but simply so it would photograph."

Both *It Came from Outer Space* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* dealt with alien visitors who were not aggressive and only sought to get along with Earth people. This, unfortunately, was not the way the '50s filmgoer wanted it—alien visitors, as far as everyone was concerned, had to be a pack of screaming war-mongers or renegade astro-beasts, destined to be blasted by the military. The token Mutant was the sole representation of aggressive force, in *This Island Earth*, and it proved to be a danger for both Earthman and alien.

This Island Earth, although somewhat dated in the special effects department, still remains as one of the more interesting and enjoyable examples of 1950s sf cinema; if it can be accepted as a product of the '50s, only then can the film be met and thoroughly enjoyed on its own terms.

This Island Earth (1955)

Jeff Morrow (as Exeter), Faith Domergue (Ruth Adams), Rex Reason (Cal Meacham), Lance Fuller (Brack), Russell Johnson (Steve Carlson), Robert Nichols (Joe Wilson), Karl Lindt (Adolph Engelborg), Douglas Spencer (Monitor), Eddie Parker (Mutant).

Directed by Joseph Newman, Screenplay by Franklin Coen and Edward G. O'Callaghan from the novel by Raymond F. Jones, Director of Photography Clifford Stine, Special photography by Clifford Stine and David S. Horsley, Edited by Virgil Vogel, Art direction by Alexander Goltzen and Richard H. Reidel, Makeup by Bud Westmore, Music by Herman Stein, Music supervised by Joseph Gershenson, Sound Leslie I. Carey and Robert Pritchard, Produced by William Alland, Colour by Technicolor. A Universal International Production.

Time: 86 mins.

BOOK WORLD

This issue, as a break from our regular book reviews, *Starburst* looks at some of the American magazines which are also devoted, in whole or in part, to the world of cinema sf.

FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND 152 Edited by Forrest J. Ackerman. There's only one place to start when reviewing fantasy film magazines and that's with the granddaddy of them all—*Famous Monsters*. Although not the first magazine covering horror and science fiction films—a British mag titled *Screen Chills* has that honour—FM is the longest-running, now in its 21st year. There must be countless fans who can thank FM for their introduction to the genre.

Until recent years the magazine was entirely Forry Ackerman's. He not only edited it but wrote most (if not all) of the articles. Things are different now; while Ackerman still edits the magazine most of the articles are by others. Even so, the style has not altered much—the material is still written with the younger reader firmly in mind though Ackerman's dreadful puns are not quite so much in evidence as they used to be.



As if to underline the fact that *Famous Monsters* is intended for a younger market the current issue includes a two-page listing of all the Superman merchandise—from bubble bath to underwear—currently available. By cover-features the listing Warren Publishing make it apparent who they are trying to attract.

It is with the older material that the magazine (and Forry Ackerman) scores over its younger competitors: the coverage of the latest films—*Superman*, *Star Wars* et al—is basically the same as can be obtained elsewhere.

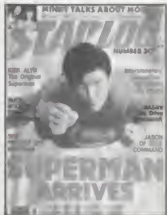
Issue 152 includes an 8-page synopsis of *Superman The Movie*, a 3-page Valerie Perrine interview, the previously-mentioned merchandise guide, and a *Superman* cartoon. Fourteen pages out of a total of 92 devoted to the film of the moment—that's about par for a typical issue.

Apart from the *Superman* material the articles vary widely ranging from the first part of a feature on Werewolf movies

to a film news column entitled *Things To Come* (where have I heard that before?) and *From Other Worlds*—6 pages on film aliens. Also, ever present, is Warren Publishing's Captain Company merchandising concern. They list a kind-boggling variety of books, films, kits etc., but take up an incredible 25 pages—over a quarter of the total available!

Famous Monsters is not a magazine for those who want an informative read but is ideal for youngsters just starting to acquire an interest in fantasy films especially if they tend to prefer horror.

AC
Published monthly by Warren Publishing Co. 92 pages. \$2.00 Import.



STARLOG 20 Edited by Howard Zimmerman.

Starlog started only three years ago (a mere youngster compared to *Famous Monsters*), and used to be aimed primarily at the fans of *Star Trek* and, to a lesser extent, *Space 1999*. Initially on a quarterly schedule the magazine became a bi-monthly and is now preparing to make the transition to a monthly frequency.

Variety and visual impact are *Starlog*'s main assets. It scores over *Famous Monsters* by having 46 of its 80 pages in colour. But somehow, in trying to widen its scope, the magazine was becoming very fragmented. What started out as a fine attempt to cover sf in cinema and on tv became peppered with a mish-mash of sf art and science fact articles. And though much of the non-media sf has been moved to *Starlog*'s sister publication, *Future*, there is still enough of that sort of material to make parts of *Starlog* rather boring.

The contents of *Starlog 20* cover a wide range of subjects including *Superman* (naturally!), Part 15 of their special series (this one's on model-building), *Buck Rogers*' 50th Anniversary, *Mork & Mandy* and building your own spaceship.

The *Superman* material is especially interesting. There is not only the expected article on the movie but also an interview with the 1940s screen *Superman*—Kirk Alyn.

Apart from the features there are a number of regular columns, *Space Report* by Gerry Anderson, *State of the Art* by David Garrold, and *Star Trek Report* by Susan Sackett plus plenty of space devoted to news.

One complaint, and a fairly major one, is that *Starlog* tends to be disappointed in its layouts, its pages often having a very "bitty" look to them.

Nevertheless, *Starlog* has already "given birth" to *Future* and another two titles are soon to be added to the list.

These are *Cinemagic*—devoted to special effects and sounding ideal for the amateur film-maker and *Fantascia* which sounds like a mature *Famous Monsters* of Filmland. Both magazines will be available in the U.K. by May and will retail at 75p and 85p respectively.

AC/AM
Published every six weeks by O'Guine Studios Inc. 80 pages. 85p.

MEDIASCENE 33 Edited by James Steranko.

Published by artist Steranko's Supergraphics company, *Mediascene* is a tabloid newspaper that covers most aspects of the fantasy genre including books, films, and comics.

The articles are mainly about films on release and in production or about artists or writers with new books available or soon to be published. But, as ever, there is also a news section which is devoted almost entirely to the latest rumblings at the Marvel and DC comic companies.

Mediascene is very definitely a newspaper. It does not concern itself with the past to any great extent, instead content to be informative about current events in the major areas of fantasy.

The latest issue, number 33, is vastly different from past issues though. Steranko has headed this one as an all-art poster special end, apart from the



editorial and the advertisements, there is not a word in it!

Instead there are 20 full-page black & white posters by some of the top comic-book fantasy illustrators. They are Adkins(1), Alcala(2), Jones(2),

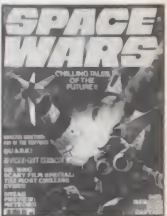
Kelute(2), Nobres(2), Russell(1), Smith(2), Steranko(6), Thorne(1) and Wrightson(2). There is a colour centre-page spread (of Marvel's superheroes) by Steranko and the front and back covers—by Boes—are also in colour.

Mediascene 33 is an interesting and unusual issue and makes a varied collection of fantasy art available at a reasonable price.

The posters and the one-page editorial take up 26 pages—the remaining 10 pages going to catalogue Supergraphics's list of material for sale!

The variety is as wide as that of Warren's Captain Company but this time the emphasis is on fantasy books and posters. Whilst I'd rather read articles than look at advertising, I appreciate that advertising is a necessary evil and I prefer that the ad's complement the editorial content (as those in *Famous Monsters* and *Mediascene* do) rather than stand out as jarring intrusions.

AC
Published bimonthly by Supergraphics. 15 x 11 1/2" 36 pages \$1.75 Import.



SPACE WARS Volume 2/4 Edited by Buddy Weiss.

Space Wars is a magazine currently seen only infrequently in the U.K. Combining, as it does, comic strip and features on fantasy films, it is slightly reminiscent of the late, lamented *House of Hammer*.

In this magazine however the strip is only a small part of the contents, taking up a mere 6 pages although it is given some prominence being at the very front.

Once past this strip—a caveman/alien close-encounter, well drawn and written by Gene Day—you come to a wide variety of articles crammed into the remaining 55 pages.

There's the inevitable news column (this time entitled *Future Fantasy*), a preview of *Meteor*, a *Captain Nemo* review, articles on *The Music* of Bernard Herrmann, s-f serials, a feature on Britain's own Dr. Who and a piece on *The Day of the Triffids*. As is usual with the less well-known magazines the articles are very basic, holding no surprises for the knowledgeable fan,

but well-written nonetheless.

If Space Wars was readily obtainable in the UK I'm sure it would find its own market amongst the younger readers but it is not a magazine that will set the world alight.

AC
Published bimonthly by Stories Layouts
& Press Inc. 68 pages \$1.50 Import.



OMNI 4 Edited by Frank Kondig
It is difficult to see exactly what Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione had in mind when he inaugurated OMNI, but whatever it was OMNI 4 can't be it. Can it? The January issue of the magazine is a bizarre mish-mash of science fact, second-string science fiction writers and Gosh-I-Bet-There-Are-Flying-Saucer articles. There is a concession to media science fiction in the form of a 1½ page interview with Richard Donner, director of *Superman The Movie*, though it can hardly be described as a definitive piece.

That section of OMNI's audience who display an insatiable thirst for science fact but have never heard of *Scientific American* are well catered for. The features do lean towards if in that they are highly speculative. The subject matter ranges from anti-gravity (all you need is a four million ton rock and a bunch of diamond pillars to support it!) to a do-it-yourself sturship piece (Alpha Centauri here I come!). But if, like me, you find words like "deoxy-ribonucleic acid" confusing, then why not just look at the pictures? One colour spread is devoted to a photo of a lot of coloured splooges. This, the copy assures us, is the world's first ever picture of the atom. Who would have thought that such a major scientific breakthrough could look so much like a lot of coloured splooges? However as a counterpoint, the twelve page "pictorial" on the microscopic photography of Fritz Gore is fascinating, but hardly entertaining stuff for the sf fan.

The science fiction content of the magazine does not read like a who's who of sf. The stories, while mildly diverting, are in the main highly forgettable, and are penned by such notables as Jack Haldeman, Paul Nohin, Tony Holtham, Dean Lembe and Nancy Cress.

The rest of the magazine is filled out with US Air Force officers and Flying Saucer aficionados airing their views on both sides of the UFO debate. Occasionally, the two factions meet in

the letters column. "Why do the USAF persist in this cover-up?" scream the UFO buffs. "Why do these UFO buffs persist in this paranoia?" scream the USAF. The whole argument has become repetitive with the lack of hard evidence to back up either school of thought and OMNI with its apparent preoccupation with the subject is leaning that way too.

It is interesting to note that the magazine is produced by OMNI Publications and not by Guccione's main Penthouse Publishing company, a move that surely means that should the magazine fail it would not hurt the rest of the company. Nothing like a publisher having confidence in his product!

OMNI has an expensive look to it. It has up-market ads, up-market graphics. What a shame the editorial content cannot match up to the visual appearance of the magazine! AM

Published by OMNI Publications International Ltd. 148 pages. 95p.



QUESTAR Edited by William G. Wilson

Yet another of the comic-fanzine-turned-professional school of publications. Though *Questar* itself was never a comic fanzine, its editor William Wilson was the guiding hand of *The Collector* before entering the cutthroat world of pro publishing. Unfortunately Wilson's main influences are apparent to an almost painful degree. If you are a film fan and you chance across this magazine on the newsstands you could be forgiven for believing it to be a film-oriented magazine.

The cover sports the three different screen versions of Superman. Kirk Alyn, George Reeves and the latest Christopher Reeve. The cover lines are advertising *Battlestar Galactica*, *Body Snatchers*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Dawn of the Dead*. But the disappointment comes when the reader opens the magazine and begins to read. For though the magazine appears to be a fantasy film fan's dream, less than half of the magazine's 60 pages of editorial material are concerned with films, fantasy or otherwise. The remainder of the periodical is filled out with strange, rather esoteric, comic strips; one by American comic fan, Fred Heenbeck, one from top artist of the early sixties, Steve Ditko and a somewhat vulgar strip by W. McKey.

Overall, the magazine's quality does

not justify the rather high cover-price, despite the superior printing and the glossy paper, and the fact that of 64 pages only 23 are in colour suggests the editor is not making full use of the available colour facilities. AM
Published quarterly by MW Communications. 64 pages. \$2.00. Import.



SCIENCE FANTASY FILM CLASSICS 4 Edited by Teresa Bernatt.

This magazine has to be one of the strangest of the sf film magazines in that it defies classification. SFFC is very sparse in the picture department and it is difficult to tell whether this is deliberate (because the editor is aiming at a more literate market) or because they cannot obtain sufficient visual material.

The format of *Science Fantasy Film Classics* is such that only three movies or tv series are covered in any one issue. In the latest issue the line up is *Battlestar Galactica*, *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun* (aka *Doppelgänger*) and *When Worlds Collide*. The latter two would tend to reinforce the theory that the editors of the magazine are trying to capture a more mature, more specialist audience.

Over all, *Science Fantasy Film Classics* is an enigma. It is a magazine that has been conceived, produced and is trying to find a market rather than having been conceived and produced with a specific market in mind. AM
Published bimonthly by Science Fantasy Film Classics Inc. 72 pages. Import.



FANTASTIC FILMS 8 Edited by "Irv Kerchner"
It is becoming more and more difficult

to tell whether some of the magazines being published in the USA are being produced professionally or by fans.

Fantastic Films has a professional look but reads like a (good) fanzine. The combination makes the magazine something of an oddity. While the articles are fairly well researched they suffer by containing silly grammatical errors. Though a few "literals" are permissible, the mistakes in *Fantastic Films* tend to detract from one's enjoyment of the magazine.

This issue contains interviews with Ralph Bakshi (*Lord of the Rings*) Glen Larson, Christian Nyby and Ken Swenson (*Battlestar Galactica*) and Larry 'Buster' Crabbe (*Flash Gordon*).

There's a poster with each issue of *Fantastic Films* - the current one by Judy King Rianista is a collage of scenes from *Lord of the Rings*. In full colour and measuring 31 x 20" it is fine artistically but not a poster. I would prefer a further 16 pages of editorial.

AC
Published bimonthly by Blake Publishing Corp. 72 pages \$2.00 Import.



FUTURE 8 Edited by Howard Zimmerman.

Visually *Future* is similar to its stable mate - *Starlog*. Colour is plentiful and there is the usual profusion of illustrations.

Even editorially the two magazines have much in common - in this issue there are features on *Superman The Movie*, invasion of the *Body Snatchers* and *The Adventures of Stella Star*.

The major difference lies in the number of pages not devoted to tv and movies. *Future* leans heavily in this direction by presenting interviews with science fiction authors (Jerry Pournelle), articles on sf artists (David Hardy) and much more on activities in the world of science and technology. Even a number of the regular columns are about science rather than sf.

Incidentally there's a name-change - to *Future Life* - with the next issue and I believe a price rise to 95p(?) is also in the offing.

AC
Published every six weeks by Future Magazine Inc. 80 pages 85p.

Reviews by Alex Carpenter and Alan Murdoch.



Report by Alan Murdoch

Following more than a year of speculation, rumour and counter-rumour, the long-awaited sequel to the world's most successful movie began shooting in March earlier this year. The production has the working title **The Empire Strikes Back** and will reunite the players and many of the technicians who worked together on **Star Wars**. After filming the Ice Planet on location in Norway the cast and crew will move to the EMI-Elstree studios near London for 15 weeks of studio-based filming.

The cast of **The Empire Strikes Back** is headed by the three young actors who made such names for themselves in **Star Wars**. Mark Hamill will repeat his role as Luke Skywalker with Harrison Ford as Han Solo and Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia Organa.

Anthony Daniels and Kenny Baker will be appearing once more as the robotic Laurel and Hardy—C-3PO and R2-D2, while David Prowse again wheezes his way through the role of the demonic Darth Vader (I knew he didn't really die!). And Peter Mayhew returns as that cantankerous seven-foot Wookiee, Chewbacca.

An important new addition to the regular **Star Wars** crew is Billy Dee Williams, an actor who made his name alongside Diana Ross in her two sojourns into the film world, **Mahogany** and **Lady Sings the Blues**.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the camera, most of the original **Star Wars** crew returns, joined by several newcomers. George Lucas, creator of the **Star Wars** legend, acts as executive producer, while Gary Kutz is in the producer's seat once again. The movie is under the directorial guidance of Irvin Kershner whose most recent film was **Eyes of Laura Mars** starring Faye Dunaway. The draft script was written, from a George Lucas original story, by sf veteran Leigh Brackett—only weeks before her tragic death in March 1978. The script then being revised and completed by new talent Larry Kasdan.

Several key **Star Wars** personnel are contributing to **The Empire Strikes Back**. These include John Williams, film score; Norman Reynolds, production design; Stuart Freeborn, makeup supervisor; Ralph McQuarrie, design consultant. The special effects are being handled by Brian Johnson, well-known for his contributions to 2001, **The Day the Earth Caught Fire**, **Alien** (see report elsewhere this issue) and **Space 1999**.

Producer Kutz says that the main



Above: A production painting of the rebel base on the planet of Hoth. Below: Despite rumours to the contrary C-3PO will be returning to appear alongside his companion R2-D2.





The Millennium Falcon, piloted by Han Solo with Princess Leia, C-3PO and Chewbacca as passengers, is forced to hide in a huge crater on an asteroid when pursued by Empire forces.

ingredient of the movie, like *Star Wars*, is high adventure. In addition to new environments there will be new human and alien characters. "We feel that now we have familiarised audiences with the basic environment we can introduce even more imaginative extensions of it while at the same time bringing some emphasis to heightened emotional relationships between the characters," said Kurtz.

Kurtz's statement plus the synopsis of the plot released by 20th Century-Fox make *Empire* sound a very tasty morsel indeed, despite the tendency of sequels to be lower on quality than their predecessors. The opening sequences of the film take place on the Ice Planet of Hoth, where Princess Leia and the remains of her Rebel Alliance have taken refuge. Under constant attack by the forces of the Galactic Empire, over which Lord Darth Vader rules with an iron fist, the Rebel Alliance is losing ground.

Their base is a huge ice-cavern from which Luke Skywalker and Han Solo range the frozen snowcaps in search of clues to the enigma of its sinisterly alien wastes. Meanwhile, in surrounding

space, Vader's mighty squadrons are mobilising for a punitive assault.

In the bitter battle that follows the rebels are both outnumbered and under-strength but some of them escape. Luke, with R2-D2, is guided to a remote swamp-infested jungle planet, to seek the Jedi Master from whom both his father and Ben Kenobi learned the mysteries of the Force.

With customary reckless courage Han manages to escape with the Princess, C-3PO and Chewbacca in the Millennium Falcon. They are relentlessly hunted through space and forced to hide in the crater of an asteroid. They eventually flee to the gaseous planet of Bespin where Han hopes that a one-time buddy, the brash Baron Lando Calrissian, who now runs the mining colony there, will aid them. But there is a price on Han's head; he is wanted by bounty hunters, of whom the most notorious is the inscrutable Boba Fett.

Learning of his friends' predicament and fearing their sanctuary may have become a trap, Luke knows that he must go to them. So he leaves his quest for knowledge to face Darth Vader in a

climactic confrontation for which he realizes he is not fully prepared.

Star Wars fans around the world are breathlessly awaiting the opening of the movie, scheduled for May 1980 in USA and Canada and Autumn 1980 for the rest of the world. Twelve months . . . and counting.

Seems like only yesterday that *Star Wars* opened in London!

The Empire Strikes Back (1979)

Mark Hamill (as Luke Skywalker), Harrison Ford (*Han Solo*), Carrie Fisher (*Princess Leia Organa*), Billy Dee Williams (*Baron Lando Calrissian*), Anthony Daniels (*C-3PO*), David Prowse (*Lord Darth Vader*), Peter Mayhew (*Chewbacca*), Kenny Baker (*R2-D2*).

Directed by Irvin Kershner, Screenplay by Leigh Brackett and Larry Kasdan from a story by George Lucas, Production design by Norman Reynolds, Design consultant Ralph McQuarrie, Set dresser Mike Ford, Special effects directed by Brian Johnson, Costumes designed by John Mollo, Makeup supervisor and special creatures Stuart Freeborn, Music by John Williams, Associate producer Robert Watts, Produced by Gary Kurtz, Executive producer George Lucas. Distributed by 20th Century-Fox.

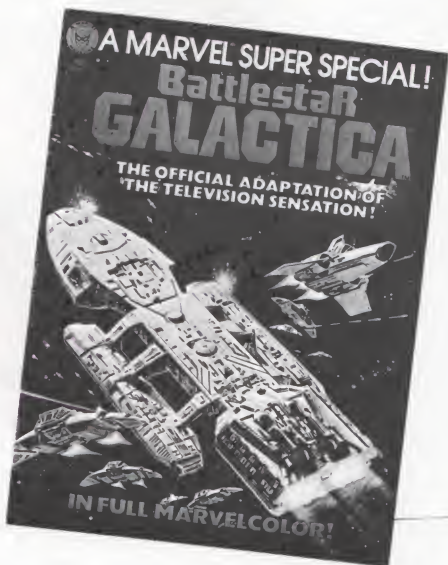
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